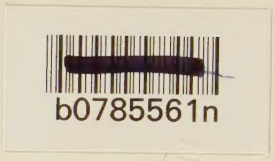
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IN AMERICAN POETRY 7.50

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FROM
WHITMAN TO SANDBURG
IN
AMERICAN POETRY

A Critical Survey

BY
BRUCE WEIRICK
ASSOCIATE IN ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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21318

TO
THE YOUNG PEOPLE
IN MY CLASSES AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
WHO HAVE SO AMIABLY
LISTENED TO THESE
DISCOURSES

It is a pleasure to acknowledge the assistance of Professor Stuart P. Sherman and Professor Jacob Zeitlin who have read various parts of this manuscript and in its formative stages ventured critical aid.

PREFACE

This book attempts to do two things: to give a critical estimate of the American poetry of the last fifty years; and to supply at the same time the setting, national and cultural, without which such an estimate must necessarily be thin or meaningless. It is, therefore, a discussion of the American imagination, or as Henry James would say, of the American scene, as it reveals itself in our modern poetry. The results will be a surprise to many. They have surprised me. The edifice has assumed proportions so impressive that one needs a little perspective to glimpse its outlines. That perspective is what one misses in a casual reading, and the result is too often patronage or contempt. A study of the entire field should go far toward removing such feelings.

Ignorance of Walt Whitman is, of course, no longer excusable. He is our greatest poet, and does indeed bestride this narrow world like a Colossus. His shadow is everywhere on our modern literature, and his importance is vaster than even the egotism which some of his critics ascribe to him could have foreseen. Much of this book, therefore, is concerned with his influence, and his point of view as democrat, mystic, and poet.

Though none of the other poets approach him in size or comprehensiveness, many of them are none the less greatly significant. Nationalism, cosmopolitan influences in art and politics, a varying naturalism and mysticism, futilitarianism, and a new and abounding Titanism, are some of the marks of the later bards. Folk poetry, too, with its rude action, domestic sentiments, and humor is scarcely less significant of the divine average and its moods.

If it be asked where all this poetry tends, what it means as to the drift of American life, certain answers can be given. In the first place, it is a drift away from New England. The world of Longfellow and Holmes, of Whittier and Lowell and Bryant, is become a relique. It was a derivative and sterile culture, lacking the seeds that could keep on growing, and only in its political views does it still reign. Despised Manhattan's bard had a cannier vision, of a nation amorphic, fluid, aspiring, crude, profoundly mystical and passionate. And it is toward that vision, prophetic indeed, that we now tend. And the proof of this, if proof be demanded, is in experience. Only those with some such virus in the blood have succeeded in poetry in producing anything vital. Lanier, Miller, Hovey, Carman, Santayana, Moody, Masters, Lindsay, Amy Lowell, Sarett, Sandburg. How like the father are they countenanced! And how inconsiderable on the other hand is the showing of the New England school with

the albuminous Victorians, the popular balladists, and the note of futility in Robinson and Frost!

And if this drift alarms the reader, let him take some comfort in this thought: though there is more danger here, more imagination than prudence, there is, too, more excitement and more joy.

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FROM
WHITMAN TO SANDBURG
IN AMERICAN POETRY

CHAPTER ONE

WALT WHITMAN

First hymn we the father of all things.

CHAPTER ONE

WALT WHITMAN

I

Whitman Our Contemporary

One's-Self I Sing

"One's-Self I sing—a simple, separate Person;
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word *En-masse.*

Of Physiology from top to toe I sing;
Not physiognomy alone, nor brain alone, is worthy for the muse
—I say the Form complete is worthier far;
The Female equally with the male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,
Cheerful—for freest action form'd, under the laws divine,
The Modern Man I sing."

So Walt Whitman announced to the haughty Shade of history his Epic of the new world. It is fitting that a book on modern American poetry should begin with that announcement. For what Homer was to the early Greeks, Virgil to the Roman Empire, Dante to the Middle Ages, and Shakespeare to Renaissance England, Whitman has become to our early American Democracy.

Though he died in 1892, and published his first version of *Leaves of Grass* so long ago as 1855, he is to-day both at home and in Europe, the most stimulating influence in contemporary poetry. Such a success, so long delayed, has been partly due to the fact that like Wordsworth, he has had to create the taste that was to enjoy him. His contemporaries for the most part found it quite impossible to read him. Lowell himself confessed that though he had read *Leaves of Grass* three times, he "couldn't see anything in it," and Lowell was in his day a most exemplary American critic. Though a few enthusiasts like Emerson could exclaim in the excitement of discovery, "Americans in Europe may now come home, for unto us a child is born," such an opinion until lately has been considered a bit "transcendental." And so for fifty years most Americans have followed Lowell in preferring our better domesticated New England poets, though it is not clear that as a result they have produced much poetry that we now care to read. Only recently we have begun to take Emerson's advice and read Whitman and it is not a little interesting that such a change in taste should appear contemporaneously with a renaissance in American poetry.

Every one by this time has either credited or debited Whitman with his share in the recent free verse or imagist movement, arising as it did in the French imitations of his poetry, and then returning from French verse to influence English and Ameri-

can writers. And every one knows that he is the author of the popular poem on Lincoln, "O, Captain! My Captain!"; and that certain lines or poems in *Leaves of Grass,* which Emerson disputed so vainly with him on Boston Common, were considered gross and immoral. These are the things that for a long time have won him such attention as he had; though it is hardly necessary to add that they are not the elements on which his claim to fame is to be based. World reputations are not so easily established.

What is more important to modern poetry, and more beneficial than his influence on verse forms, has been his rôle as the god-father of a whole line of new poets, his power of exciting the passions of the contemporary mind, and of suggesting a treatment of things American that is realistic and at the same time national and imaginative. In a land where Emerson feared that too much handicraft would make our western wits fat and mean, Whitman rose to sing his "Carol of Occupations," and show the soul of goodness in things evil.

> "In the labor of engines and trades, and the labor of fields,
> I find the developments,
> And find the eternal meanings."

Did you think this a land where nature is but a law or a machine, and life but a tale told in a factory? Look a little closer, says Whitman, and you will find as in the days of Homer, "underfoot the divine soil—overhead the sun." Is your notion of culture

something created two thousand years ago in Greece? Whitman's is a more encouraging idea.

> "The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done their work, and pass'd to other spheres;
> A work remains, the work of surpassing all they have done."

Audacious? True! Yet is there not something American in it? Like the muse of poetry whose migration to America he was to sing in his "Song of the Exposition," he was not afraid to go striding through the confusion of modern life,

> "By thud of machinery and shrill steam whistle undismay'd,
> Bluff'd not a bit by drain pipe, gasometers, and artificial fertilizers,"

to sing the epic of the new world. The example of a poet who would dare to make such an effort was, if nothing else, arousing and liberating. In a land where common sense in business had combined with a scientific materialism in the intellect to crush the soul, he was to show us again the cosmic grandeur of the ocean and the stars, and reassert the mystery and wonder of life amid these imponderables and unknowables. In an age of factory successes, he gave man again his fundamental aspect as a child of destiny. His is the world we live in, and yet strangely it is the world of Homer and Buddha and Christ and Shakespeare, the large open free environment of universals. Such a view of man and nature could not but disturb an age whose chief interests,

superficially at least, were mechanic and domestic and institutional. It was, however, a disturbance that was to prove highly salutary.

The appearance of such a poet, no æsthetic recluse, and no mere tame domestic singer, but able to take the commonplace or the national, and at his best touch them with a kind of luminous spirituality, was in American literature an event of national importance. The two influences that have obstructed our view of his poetic merits are now rapidly passing away. The first of these, the quarrel over free verse, may be dismissed with a word. There is nothing inherently ineffectual with it as a poetical medium, though it is, I suspect, the most difficult form to succeed in. Whitman succeeded gloriously, and his effects are just what he intended, large and open as the American landscape, and free as the waves of the sea, or the murmurings of the winds. His rhythms are, in short, as easy and stirring as those of a symphony, and it is largely through them that he achieves the cosmic opulence of his style.

The other check to his vogue, his lack of what we know to-day as Puritan views in morals, is a more controversial theme, and one just now much in vogue for discussion. Suffice to say that though he is very frank in matters which in his day it had been agreed that decent people should not mention, he was not indecent, at least not in the way that Byron or Fielding or Shakespeare or Boccaccio had been so. Had he been merely that, Mrs. Grundy,

who in spite of her reputation is lenient to poets in their peccadilloes, would have forgiven him. But instead of adopting the am-I-not-naughty-to-mention-sex attitude of Byron, Whitman, like the modern Freudian, tried to reclaim for the world of morals and religion, and poetical expression, that very world which Mrs. Grundy had, officially, at least, cast into outer darkness. It was not even the plea for Satan in the precincts of heaven, but the bland assumption that Satan and Deity were equally portions of the divine. Of course, such a view of sex could not but offend the Victorian view of morals as the repressing or at least the concealing of the emotions, and Whitman's earnestness and obviously prophetic spirituality only made him in their eyes all the worse.

Nowadays, however, these stern concepts are comparatively less in vogue. Much has happened to American psychology since 1855, or especially, shall we say, since 1914, and New England's conventions even in New England are not what they were. Though Mr. Stuart P. Sherman in his admirable study of Whitman takes occasion to remark that a serpent in a show-case is nevertheless a serpent, the present-day tendency is to remark that in no place is a serpent so harmless and so useful. We are, in short, more frank in these matters, and though we may not, like Whitman, make the emotions the center of our religion, we no longer think it necessary to decry a poet who does. We have in fact a sus-

picion that the greater suavity and humanity of the Catholic tradition in poets like Dante and Shakespeare as compared with the harsh and inadequate criticism of life in a Puritan poet like Milton, is partly due to the greater liberality of their conception of the proper rôle for the vital instincts. And so I think I tell an historical truth when I say that our poets to-day find Whitman's treatment of the emotions more inspiring than had he been more in harmony with Victorian conventions. He lacks the sterility which Henry Adams complained of as lying like a weight on the imagination of America, a sterility brought about by living in a land where sex did not exist. From this barrenness Whitman has done his best to liberate us, and the results, judging from a perusal of modern poetry and fiction, show that with our writers at least he has had some success.

If, then, these claims as to Whitman's importance are not extravagant, to him the student of modern poetry and modern life—for in our poets we see life better than elsewhere in its essential aspects—will do well to repair. He is the poet of the nineteenth century in whom, despite his unconventional treatment of the emotions, the time spirit is most evident and most opulent. It is still a question as to whether he was not the greatest as he is the most significant poet of the nineteenth century; and with Emerson and Lincoln, Whitman alone of the Americans of his generation is a figure of the first rank. How shall we justify so surprising a judgment?

II

The Cosmic Consciousness and Its Implications

One of the best ways to achieve perspective on things American is to go abroad and look at them from a distance. And if one can imagine himself in Paris or Moscow or Berlin engaged in the task of revealing the high points of American literature to audiences there, he would find, I venture to assert, something quite surprising happening to his notions of American poetry. Things that had seemed important here would tend to grow less so, and mountain peaks of unsuspected range would begin to stick their heads above the horizon. And we should, I think, find ourselves growing quite surprised at the unexpected massiveness we would discover in Walt Whitman, and would regroup our notes hastily so as to spend more time on him than we had intended. It would, for instance, become evident at once that he is the most elemental and the most American of our poets, that his lines are bold and easily revealed, and that he has perhaps that rarest of qualities attained by only the very greatest of the world's spirits, what the Germans term *Weltanschauung,* or world-sense, and what is perhaps better translated as his cosmic outlook. At home it has been difficult to speak of him as the equal, say, of Wordsworth. But abroad one could, because of this world

outlook of his, point to his kinship with, say, Dante, Sophocles, Cervantes, and Goethe, without at least exciting derision. Does Whitman belong in this gallery? Does any American belong there? The question is worth investigating.

If we look at these master spirits we will find that one of the chief reasons why they are universal in their sympathies is that they have perhaps not created, but that they have in their personalities assimilated a point of view with regard to the universe that is so comprehensive as to give a kind of significance and spiritual unity to everything they touch, even to the world itself. It is not merely that they reflect the divine—lesser spirits may do that—but that they transfigure and make divine everything which they reflect. Thus Dante and Buddha are raised above the mere realms of reason and philosophy to reveal a beauty and truth that is immortal, though the forms or creeds by which in their own day they secured acceptance may have long been outmoded. Few, for example, now believe in Dante's pictures of purgatory or his seven strata of hell, or think that heaven is above the earth at the top of a high cone. But the spiritual beauty of the poetry in which he revealed the ideas of the Middle Ages still appeals to sensitive readers. He was true to the laws of beauty and human nature, though false and even silly as a geographer of hell or heaven. And so it is with Homer's views of the earth's geography, and his ideas of the gods, or of

Cyclops, or of Circe and her sacred swine. In the realms of fact or reason these things no longer convince—if indeed they ever did—but in the superrational world, the world of spiritual and poetic truth, which to the mystical spirit is alone important, they are as true as ever. Not to the man of common sense or pure reason perhaps. To such persons these mystics and poets are indeed a little mad. In spite of which it is remarkable that even the hardest of the worldly-minded will, when in quest of a religion, turn from philosophy to just one of these personalities for guidance. Somehow they satisfy man's deepest instincts and build for him a region of eventual calm where his soul can rest. Thus Sancho Panza, in spite of his common-sense, is quite properly shown as a follower of the dreamer Don Quixote; and the modern scientist remains, in spite of his disbelief in the story of Jonah and the whale, or of the feeding of the five thousand, a Christian.

To produce one of these cosmic personalities is in the course of human history a rare event. So rare, indeed, that the fingers of two hands will just about suffice to number all of them. If one will say Homer, Christ, Buddha, Sophocles, Socrates, Plato, Dante, Cervantes, and Shakespeare, he will not, I think, need to add six names to make the list complete. Happy then must be that country which has the fortune to contain such an individual. They are the world's Olympians. It was, I think, the sense

for this Olympian quality in style which led Matthew Arnold to lay such emphasis on the quality of a high and excellent seriousness in poetry as an element of catharsis able to purge away the local and temporary, and reveal a permanent higher region of universal beauty. And if the style is the man, why may it not be true that we may have characters as well as poems in the grand manner, and that using them as peaks of measurement we may note the relative grandeur or lack of grandeur of the moderns whom we wish to appraise?

From so exalted a point of view, what has America to contribute to this society of the world's Olympians? The thinness of Emerson in this company I think everyone must feel. Like Marcus Aurelius, he is the aid and abettor of those who would live in the spirit, but the positive joy of direct insight was not quite his. Their great truths he indeed understood, but had not fully assimilated. The world of the senses he refined away, but could never quite partake of and transfigure.

Lincoln, the giant of Democracy, has somewhat better rights. He is to most Americans, certainly, their greatest individual. He does not seem to me out of place in the great society, though he is, perhaps, as a modern poet has called him, the most laconic of the Olympians. Having said which, I think that America has one other candidate in Walt Whitman. Whether he finally belongs here or not, it is perhaps too early to decide, but it is an inter-

esting fact that it is to these figures that even his hostile critics are more and more driven to compare him to find his measure and put down what is called the Whitman cult.

What, then, is the evidence in *Leaves of Grass* that has made Whitman at least a candidate for such eminence? And here the question is one of totality of impression. How does the entire book, not merely splendid passages or fine phrases, affect us? First, as the record of an individual. As we open his book of poems, we see that it is a series of confessions, large and rambling, like nature itself; but as we proceed we discover that in all these details, gross and unfinished though some of them may be, there is present and holding all together as in a kind of central unity, not a story or plot, and not an argument about philosophy or about God; but the personality of the author himself. That is the sun that gives health and order to its otherwise chaotic matter. From this central radiance flows an endless supply of purifying and invigorating light. And like the sun, it shines on the just and the unjust, on the pure and the gross, and is large, liberal, lusty, unselective, and inspiring. It is this cosmic unity of the parts that is so often neglected. To read selections, then, is to miss the soul of the plot, for as the author has warned us,

> "Behold! I do not give lectures, or a little charity;
> When I give, I give myself. . . . . .
> Who touches this book touches a man."

And those who read selections do not touch the book. His purpose, therefore, is not like that of the philosophers, to select and judge in favor of some system or other and call it truth, but merely by the light and warmth of his own spirit to reveal to us the world, and trust in the light and warmth of that revelation as in the healing and growth-giving qualities of the sun itself, to be beneficent and beautiful. This indeed is in effect the glory of poetry as compared with philosophy; it not only says that life is a thing of beauty, it makes us see it thus, and feel it to be so. It embodies that joy in reality.

If Whitman's character is the unifying center of *Leaves of Grass,* we are bound to inquire as to its chief qualities. What manner of man was this poet who was able to see the glory of God even in death, or in machinery, or in the life of nature? And here we arrive at the central fact of his character: he was a mystic. By mystic we usually mean a person who worships, and loves, and lives, in the light of the supernatural. This supernatural may appear to him as God, or as abstract beauty, as the forces of nature, or as a spirit of good or evil. Some mystics like William Blake actually see and talk to the object of their worship; others like Emerson do so only in faith or by prayer, and not directly; and the object of this communion is love, the desire to mix and mingle and be totally lost and absorbed in the divine. Though mysticism is the essence and basis

of religion, and Whitman's mysticism partook of many of the transcendental elements of his predecessors, it was nevertheless original, as all mysticism is when reflected through the medium of a powerful personality. Indeed it was so original as to make him in our modern days a new type of transcendentalist.

The great religious leaders of ancient times for the benefit of their less gifted followers were accustomed to leave behind them bits of advice as to how to attain to true blessedness. Thus Mr. Paul Elmer More, in a pamphlet on Socrates, points out that Buddha stressed the discipline of the will as a prelude to the blessedness of *nirvana;* that Socrates thought that by the cultivation of the reason, by dialectic, one could discover the universal laws of love and beauty, and so achieve *the ideal* toward which his unsatisfied love of earthly beauty yearned; and that Christianity stressed the joy of an emotional surrender to *divine love,* where, as a step to that divine emotion, no doubt human love, as in the Greek system, was a useful if not a necessary prelude. Now it will be noted that all these types are what is termed dualistic; that is they reject or despise everything in the world that cannot be used in their system as a stairway to heaven. They stress the rift in human nature, give the world over to evil, and do not pretend to understand life save as a kind of prison where the soul may prepare for the life to come.

Now though Whitman, too, is a mystic and believes in another world, he does not belong to this school. In "A Child's Amaze" he tells us that

> "Silent and amazed, even when a little boy,
> I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God in his statements,
> As contending against some being or influence."

It was his aspiration to worship more inclusively. Let us, said he, not pretend to divide creation with our own little whims. Let us *accept the universe,* and see what can be made of that! So magnificent a tolerance was new, if not to philosophy, at least to modern poetry; and it was this unheard of attempt of his to see the world itself as if mystically translated that has led Mr. George Santayana to decry Whitman as a poet of barbarism, "who regards his passions as their own excuse for being; who does not domesticate them either by understanding their cause or by conceiving their ideal goal." But to reason so, is to assume that such a goal is possible of attainment only by the idealistic or dualistic route. Life's cause or its ideal goal Whitman admits is a mystery. Was it not Socrates who held the greatest sin to be pretense to knowledge that one does not possess? But what Whitman does celebrate and achieve in unprecedented measure is just that joy of the spirit in the midst of earthly things which the dualists either defer to the life to come, or which they achieve at the expense of half of human life.

The notion, therefore, that Whitman is barbaric fails, I think, to see his ability to reveal this diffusion of spiritual light over even the rudest elements of the world.

> "And our visions, the visions of poets, are the most solid announcements of any.
>
> For we support all, fuse all,
> After the rest is done and gone, we remain;
> There is no final reliance but upon us;
> Democracy rests finally upon us
> And our visions sweep through eternity."

Far from denying salvation to man, Whitman wishes to make it prevail here, now, all over the earth. He is in a way a kind of Promethean mystic. It is not that he denies evil, but that by the mystical self-poise of his soul he has faith that evil too may be a part of the perfect plan. This is not reason, but faith. And yet it is a little more than faith; it is a plan which if followed can in its mysterious way build for the soul here on earth a citadel of perfection. Whitman, therefore, has the distinction of being a spiritual pioneer, and of attempting to reclaim for human nature some of the abandoned world which the dualists had definitely given over. *Leaves of Grass* is his monument to that attempt.

> "For I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least."

If then genuine mystical insight is an element necessary to the world outlook of the greatest men,

it seems to me that a case may be made out for Whitman. He is, I surmise, the most opulent of the mystics, for to him not only heaven, but the very earth itself, is celestial.

"I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the egg of the wren,
And a tree toad is a chef-d'œuvre for the highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of heaven."

III

His Master Passions

Whence did such abilities arise, and how did they seek and find expression? Not as with Buddha from the negations of the will, nor as with Plato from the passion of the reason. Whitman's beatitude was more simple of achievement. His master passion was love. Not merely the love of writing poetry. *Mere* poetry he disliked, and wrote only as a prophet seeking to convince, rather than as a poet seeking literary glory. This love revealed itself in several major interests: in his *attachment to his friends;* in his *worship of nature;* and in his *passion for Democracy.* These are the themes he delights in, and over them all he throws the amplitude and dignity of a large and tolerant soul. His joy in these things is indeed so great, that he can find even

in the meaner forms of love, or in the aberrations of Democracy, or in the bitter hug of mortality, no cause for alarm. His is a kind of Platonic joy right here even in this world that soon will vanish.

> "Not to exclude or demarcate or pick out evils from their formidable masses (even to expose them)
> But add, fuse, complete, extend—and celebrate the immortal and the good,"

is his ideal of the best way to moralize the day.

This ideal he extended to new and sometimes rather startling extremes. His gospel of nudity, which he developed in order to show in an emphatic way that he thought the Body the equal and mate of the Soul, seemed to many indecent. Yet his purpose even there was a fair one: to show the emotions as real and yet as spiritual. "Is not nakedness then indecent? No, not inherently. It is your thought, your fear, your respectability, that is indecent." That the shock of hearing that their bodies weren't wicked, but that their minds were, was good for those unhealthily hot-house days, I think most modern readers are glad, perhaps a little too glad, to admit. He was I suspect led into this belief about the body by means of an analogy. Nature consists of rocks and stones and trees, has a body, is gross, and yet is beautiful, terrible, sad, happy, and has to all seeming a soul. Man is a piece of nature and shares with her both of these attributes. Why then should he be any more ashamed of his body than

of any other fact of nature? It was not in Whitman to deny the divinity of any created thing. Such false modesty was therefore to him a kind of irreligion, and so, despite his tolerance, he made haste to expose it.

NATURE

This pantheistic doctrine, that nature is but the physical expression of a spirit, was popular before Whitman in the romantic movement, and for it he is indebted partly to Wordsworth and to Rousseau. But his view of nature is somewhat different from theirs. Rousseau's idyllic scenes celebrate as a fact a golden age of goodness that in fact never did exist; Wordsworth's nature does not include sex, evolution, or evil; as both Rousseau and Wordsworth ascribe evil chiefly to man and his institutions. In Whitman's nature, however, we have this clashing chaos of reality, of struggle and survival. His distinction, therefore, lies partly in his greater inclusiveness; but chiefly in his ability to reconcile the harmony and peace which the early sentimental naturalists felt, with the dissolution and strife which they chose to ignore. His praise of "the friendly and flowing savage" would have charmed Rousseau; and Wordsworth perhaps would have enjoyed

> "I think I could turn and live with the animals, they are so placid and self-contained,
> I stand and look at them long and long,"

as an example of "wise passivity." But I doubt if Wordsworth would have abandoned himself entirely to the triumphant sweep of Whitman's cosmic worship. Rousseau would have been more willing, but he lacked the apocalyptic insight to chant with Whitman,

"The pleasures of heaven are with me, and the pains of hell are with me;
The first I graft and increase upon myself—the latter I translate into a new tongue."

And how cheerfully in this "new tongue" is the assurance of immortality in nature revealed.

"Whether I come to my own today, or in ten thousand or ten million years,
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can wait.

My foot hold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite;
I laugh at what you call dissolution;
And I know the amplitude of time."

Or to continue his mystical revelation of himself and so by implication of ourselves too, as the container and explainer of nature, we hear

"I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I am an encloser of things to be.
My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs;
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between the steps;
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me;
Afar down I see the huge first nothing—I know I was even there;
. . . .
Immense have been the preparations for me . . .
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul."

And if you object to this as mere contradiction, what right, Whitman asks, have you to suppose that nature obeys the laws of reason?

"Logic and sermons never convince;
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul."

Or even more strikingly—

"Do I contradict myself?
Very well, then, I contradict myself;
(I am large—I contain multitudes.)"

And then in his final exquisite lines of the poem "Walt Whitman," we have his magnificent suggestion of the elusiveness and joy of man's union with nature once it is really felt as a mystical union.

"The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me—he complains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed—I too am untranslatable;
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me;
It flings my likeness after the rest, and true as any, on the shadow'd wilds;
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air—I shake my white locks at the runaway sun;
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeathe myself to the dirt, to grow from the grass I love;
If you want me again, look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am, or what I mean;
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first, keep encouraged;
Missing me one place, search another;
I stop somewhere, waiting for you."

This knowledge that man is but a part of nature makes many poets sad. But Whitman with truly limitless optimism sings in his death carol a pæan of joy as pure and lovely as anything in the poetry of dissolution, the well known song in the "Lincoln Burial Hymn,"

"Come, lovely and soothing Death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later, delicate Death.

Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious;
And for love, sweet love—But praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding Death.

Dark Mother, always gliding near, with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?

Then I chant it for thee—I glorify thee above all;
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come unfalteringly.

Approach, strong Deliveress!
When it is so—when thou hast taken them, I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving, floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss, O Death.

From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose, saluting thee—adornments and feastings for thee;
And the sights of the open landscape, and the high-spread sky, are fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.

The night, in silence, under many a star;
The ocean shore, and the husky whispering wave, whose voice I know;
And the soul turning to thee, O vast and well-veil'd Death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song!
Over the rising and sinking waves—over the myriad fields, and the prairies wide;
Over the dense-pack'd cities all, and the teeming wharves and ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee, O Death!"

That such a joy is unnatural, or perhaps better, unhuman, we may believe. Certainly it is only by means of a supernatural or mystical sense that one arrives at such large utterance or confident vision.

No doubt it were wise to have such a sense, but for most of us it is difficult of attainment.

DEMOCRACY

In his Americanism, Whitman is at one with Lincoln and Jefferson and the great tradition. Lincoln's wise rule of freedom "as I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master," Whitman extends to the passionate equalitarianism of this password primæval: "By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms." Criticism in little of the un-American spirit of class war and imperialistic aggression which to-day make the patriot grieve! He believes in liberty and he believes too in union.

> "One's-Self I sing—a simple separate person;
> Yet utter the word Democratic, the word *En-masse.*"

And so we might answer, do we all of us. Yet how shall the two be reconciled? It is the chief problem of modern statecraft. Whitman's answer has a simple, indeed a Christian impressiveness. For it is merely in a bond of good will, in the friendship of citizens one with another, that he looks to see the stability of the state.

> "Come, I will make the continent indissoluble;
> I will make the most splendid race the sun ever yet shone upon;
> I will make divine magnetic lands,
> With the love of comrades,
> With the life-long love of comrades."

And as individualism and the union of the nation are both to be accomplished by love within the country, so he looks beyond patriotism to the parliament of man where nationality shall merge into international union by means of like bonds. This, he tells us, is the Great Idea; this it is for which America was created. Patriotism like nature, or like friendship, we are to keep free and open by seeing its larger relations. And so like Lincoln and Jefferson, he sees America as a pioneer leading on to liberty the procession of modern states.

"Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied, over there beyond the seas?
We take up the task eternal, and the burden, and the lesson,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!"

It is the mystical power of this heroic vision, of our faith in justice and in the divine average here and in all lands that gives us the right to push off boldly into the unknown.

"O America, because you build for mankind, I build for you!"

And such a confidence, he thinks, will beget confidence, even in the cynical and disillusioned nations of Europe.

"This moment yearning and thoughtful sitting alone,
It seems to me there are other men in other lands yearning and thoughtful,

It seems to me I can look over and behold them in Germany, Italy, France, Spain,
Or far, far away in China or in Russia or Japan, talking other dialects,
And it seems to me if I could know these men I should become attached to them as I do to men in my own lands,
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them."

Whitman was brought to this faith, paradoxically, just as lately some of us were, by a great war. It was there that his patriotism burned out its dross of mere pride in expansiveness, and took on the refining gold of a world-wide band of peace. There too his high love for his fellows was tested and brought to its finest expression in his ministerings to the poor broken soldiers thrown up by the tide of war. The simple manly pathos of the scenes in his *Specimen Days* wring the heart as no mere writing can do that is not a direct experience. Though for the union as strong as any, like Lincoln, he spoke "with malice toward none," and gave his pity and love equally to the unfortunate of both sides. Nursing the soldiers in the hospitals, comforting the dying with that large sympathy of his, or looking silently at the dead on the battle field, he has left us unforgettable pictures of the pity and terror of war. As in this poignant revelation as from another world when he lifts the blanket from the face of a soldier, and finds, with something of Homeric high seriousness and disillusion,

". . . . a face nor child, nor old, very calm, as of beautiful yellow-white ivory;"
"Young man, I think I know you—I think this face of yours is the face of the Christ himself;
Dead and divine, and brother of all, and here again he lies."

Or again in the sublime calm and peace of his poem "Reconciliation," symbol of the union of the North and South:

"Word over all beautiful as the sky!
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage, must in time be utterly lost;
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly wash again, and ever again this soil'd world:
For my enemy is dead—a man divine as myself is dead;
I look where he lies, white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw near;
I bend down, and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the coffin."

This is the realm where patriotism and religion are one, united in the perfection of perfect love and perfect expression.

But we devote too much attention to the merely doctrinal implications of *Leaves of Grass,* its democracy, its hatred of classes and special privilege, its doctrine that the state exists to produce great individuals, and its belief that the production of great men and of the spirit of divine comradeship will be sufficient to unite all nations. After all, Whitman cared very little for institutions as such.

"Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?
Or by argument on paper, or by arms?"

he cries, scornfully,

"Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.
Produce great persons; the rest follows."

But this is to give but a kind of lawyer's brief of his Americanism. He is more than a poet of ideals. He is a poet of scenes and processions and people. He delights in the physical features of America and loves the whole country so well that it is impossible to think of him as belonging to any particular locality. He is as much at home by blue Ontario's shore as he is by fish-shaped Paumanok, or Facing West From California, or watching in Louisiana a live oak growing. Nor does the country delight him more than the city and harbor scenes of New York with its endless flow and processions of mysterious multitudes. This aspiration to sing all of America, not merely of the interests of a class or section accounts indeed for a good deal of the cataloguing method that irritates so many of his critics. Yet how else is it possible to include America's poetic names and dialects, Spanish and Indian and English, its flowers and birds, its wild life, its mountain, plain, and lake regions? There is in the country itself God's plenty. Surely we cannot cavil if the poet now and then finds his utterance scarcely adequate to his task. His was a giant purpose, and he has achieved much of the inclusiveness to which he aspired. For

no other American poet is so near a poet of all the people and of all the interests and sections of the land as Whitman; no other so near to what he himself aspired to be, the authentic voice of a national spirit.

FRIENDSHIP

The comradeship with which Whitman wishes to leaven the lump of internal greed and international hatreds, was with his mystical feeling for nature, and his many-sided Americanism, one of the major motives of his own life. The love of nature was a religion, the love of country and of mankind a passion. Both gave to his consciousness enlargement and the impulse of belonging to a great stream of destiny. Both, in short, connected him vitally with the universe, and both, he asserts, may do the same for us.

> "These are the thoughts of men in all ages and lands—they are not original with me;
> If they are not yours as much as mine, they are nothing, or next to nothing;
> If they are not the riddle, and the untying of the riddle, they are nothing;
> If they are not just as close as they are distant, they are nothing.
> This is the grass that grows wherever the land is or the water is;
> This is the common air that bathes the globe."

These were grand passions. His gospel of friendship is no less mystical and inclusive, though it is, I suspect, even less a possession of the average man

than his other passions. For the average man is content with the domesticities of love and a family, or at least he thinks well of the former for a time, and he endures the latter usually for a somewhat longer time. But Whitman lived differently. He praises woman as the mother of the family, and he makes many vows,

"The female equally with the male I sing!"

but it is noticeable that he left to others "these dear delightful pleasures." He never married, and though he once confessed to having had some six illegitimate children, the evidence seems against it. Perhaps it deserves to rank with those other confessions of his: I am the hounded slave, I am the mash'd fireman with his breastbone broken, I am an old artillerist, and so on, as a mystical confession embodying a higher truth. But as actual fact, I do not myself believe it. Romantic love seems to have been foreign to his nature, and whatever glamour of idealization he had in his personal relationships, he reserved for his friends. The depth of that emotion none can doubt. It is the attachment of David for Jonathan or Achilles for Patroclus, a poetic, emotional, ideal force, that fires his whole imagination and being.

But that such ideal friendship, one scarcely to be distinguished in its intensity from love, though in its greater complexity and community of spirit much wider, should be expected to form the basis of the

union of these states and of international amity, friendly acids eating at the iron of war, seems to me to be expecting from human nature a quality it does not now possess. It is as though one should expect to see in every pair of friendly companions, the glamour and beauty of Romeo and Juliet. Only to poetic natures is it given to describe their attachments in such terms. Yet the gospel of friendship is as good a gospel as any as the basis for an *ideal* world. We should not after all demand of our prophets that they describe the world in the terms of *our* limitations. What we wish is a revelation in their natures of an ideal to work toward. "Greater love hath no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friend," has not yet given all men such a love or such a friend, but it is no less admirable for all that. Even men who do not possess it may admire it, and so perhaps gradually grow toward it. Perhaps, after all, it is the way out. Certainly if we are to continue to base our society on the balance of selfishness checking selfishness (competition is the life of trade), and the aim of our nationality on imperialism checking imperialism, humanity is in for many a grim red slaying in the years to come.

IV

His Significance To-day

Admitting that Whitman is a powerful and original poet, and that his cosmic view of nature and

democracy and friendship strikes a depth beyond the reach of other modern poets, why, it may be asked, should a chapter on him be indispensable to a discussion of Masters and Lindsay and Amy Lowell? We have already suggested that he is the most contemporary poet because of the fact that his influence is only lately become astonishingly important, and because *Leaves of Grass* expresses more of the spirit and body of things American than any other one book. The very magnitude of his success once it was understood was bound to have its day with our poets, and that day has come. As we continue to read American poetry, we shall note more and more the influence of his nationalism, his humanitarian dislike of classes, and his sense for the fundamental oneness of all men. We shall see at work, too, the renovating power of his æsthetic consciousness, the desire to eliminate the dead abstractions from poetry, the stock poetical touches, as he called them, and to cling to the live and growing image itself. His view of the emotions as the inner center of spiritual life is more popular than conservatives wish it to be; but the proof of that, as of other puddings, is in the eating. What too often is forgotten is that Whitman spiritualized his emotions. His view of nature one sees again in the work of John Burroughs as well as in the poetry of Carl Sandburg—to mention only two. And in the acclaim with which the critics of all schools, Mr. Stuart P. Sherman, Mr. P. E. More, Mr. John Macy, and

Mr. H. L. Mencken—the list could be enormously extended—hail him, with fairly European unanimity, one reads the final proof of his arrival.

And so Whitman seems to have been more American than his detractors. Like all good prophets, he knew us better than we knew ourselves. Time has vindicated him, and he has at last become contemporary, even, it is curious to note, in some of those elements that were so bitterly contested. To describe in detail his typically American traits, would be to repeat much that has been said of his optimism, his joy in all our national sights and institutions and ideals. His sense of dynamic power, of hope, of life as a romantic quest, I am conscious of not mentioning enough. And in this particular he typified the soul of his age in a way that say Lowell or Longfellow did not at all do. The sense of adventurous growing life, of a nation bent on mighty things, or of the typical American as a young, barbaric, kindly, not-to-be-denied giant in quest of the joys of friendship, of self-knowledge, and international brotherhood, he reveals finely. He is the poet of a young and growing people, whose gaze is on the future, and in his youth and his ideals we behold its promise.

Perhaps what has preserved him through the years of our indifference, and has at last compelled the admiration even of those who shudder at some of his gaucheries, is his style. The finished phrasing of his best poems transfigures the ideas and images

he describes, and gives one the large effect of the blue depths of a quiet sky, or the limpidity of great waters. It is a style elemental and calm, with beauty and force in perfect equipoise. Some of his phrases are so sublime that he has misled certain critics into thinking him material for poetry, a poet of excellent fragments; but not in architectonics, not in the large, of first-rate importance. I have therefore tried to dwell on some of the more important unifying elements of *Leaves of Grass,* and have neglected the fine phrase, the splendid passage, the quotable line. Yet to find these one needs but to turn to his index of first lines—"the most poetic of all indexes." The most typical and inclusive of his poems, the one entitled Walt Whitman; certain of the poems entitled Calamus and Drum Taps; the Lincoln Burial Hymn, When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd; O Captain! My Captain!; and Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking, should be read and reread. They are the poems of one of the greatest masters of poetry with a power to fortify and inspire and sustain given to no other American bard. Nowhere else will we find the Civil War so grandly and touchingly revealed as in some of Whitman's war poems, as for example in the pathos of the poem Come Up From the Fields, Father, or in the Homeric clarity and tenderness of the Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night. And nowhere in American poetry is there so perfect a sense of the freshness of nature.

"Again the freshness and the odors—again Virginia's summer sky, pellucid blue and silver,
Again the forenoon purple of the hills,
Again the deathless grass so noiseless, soft, and green,
Again the blood-red roses blooming."

The growth of our power to appreciate his qualities may be taken as a measure of our increase in poetical capacity. It is small wonder that such a poet should be taking his place as the leader of modern American, European, and English writers. The wonder is rather that his sun has been so long in rising.

CHAPTER TWO

THE POETRY OF THE PEOPLE

Popular Ballads and Society Verse

1870-1920

"'Oh, ain't it good?' asked Guinevere."
—*The Ballad of Bread Puddynge.*

CHAPTER TWO

THE POETRY OF THE PEOPLE

It has often been pointed out that Whitman was not popular with the common people, and that the red-shirted democrat whom he so much admired preferred the band-rhythms of Longfellow to Whitman's symphonic ecstasies. This can be said too of Homer and Shakespeare, though it may be added that our plain democrats always liked Whitman when they met him. But a poet does not need a popular success in order to have a popular effect. What is needed is success with those who are popular and the trick is done. Yet this success, too, Whitman had to defer until the country had time to come round to him. If it may be admitted that Whitman from 1850 to 1880 was sounding the depths of man and nature in America, who, it will be asked, was skimming the surfaces and having those great popular successes that in all times attend on poetry?

Not that such surfaces or successes are poetically very important. But they show, as often better poetry fails to show, the local color of the average mind, its jokes, sentiments, and prejudices. By a

study of the popular ballads and light verse of fifty years, one gets the point of view of the plain citizen, finds why he was unsuited to appreciate, say, Walt Whitman, and discovers just what Whitman added to the American scene to make its average "divine." In short, from the heights one descends to the depths, and gets a new perspective. It is stimulating, therefore, to ask how Whitman's America differed from the America and Americans here revealed, and how much of truth and what kind was in each.

And if we judge by appeal, it will seem that one thing the average American of these years was unfitted to enjoy was emotional depth, poetic elevation, a style whose undercurrent ran deep. For it is a point to ponder over, that during the years from 1870 to 1910, no first-rate American poet, no one the general volume of whose work was of even what may be termed respectable literary merit was able to sell his poems in any large popular way. Our good poets had what may be called cultivated and private audiences, here and there an admirer; but the glory of living in men's mouths, and of having the man of the street—in this case Main Street—spend his money on you was reserved for the inferior, or the light-humorous, or the sentimental.

Who then were these popular poets, and what kind of world did they present as good enough to satisfy typical Americans? We have said it was not an exalted world, not deeply imaginative. What

then was it? The name Popular Balladist itself is suggestive. Did it not too often mean commonplace, vogue, and vulgarity? Not but that these poets were often lively and interesting, with a taste for the humorous, or pathetic, or boisterous, that is easy and honest enough. What oppresses one in too many of them is the old-homestead humdrum of their prejudices and sentiments, their lack of beauty, their ignorance of life as mysterious and immense, indeed, their ignorance of imponderables. Theirs is rather the world of the domestic, the every day, the pathetic, the exciting, and the silly. No amount of popularity can excuse some of their work, and no amount of popularity, it is cheerful to note, has been able to preserve it. It is remarkable how quickly a poet able to sell a million copies will die. In poetry, indeed, nothing fails like success, and sometimes nothing succeeds like failure. This is a law which it is well to remember when one is tempted to grow enthusiastic and to mistake the popularity of a modern for the success of an ancient that the crowd is not reading. A brief survey of the popular works of the fifteen or so writers in this group, entertaining and colorful as they often are, is useful, therefore, as a picture of the divine average in its shirt-sleeves; of the great American home whose dinner table is loaded, but whose library table yet awaits its feast.

I

Pike County

The popular ballad as we know it to-day began in the work of John Hay (1838-1905) and Bret Harte (1839-1902) about 1871, in what have become known as The Pike County Ballads, a name referring to a backwoods county in Missouri, and having as part of its association much of the frontier western roughness that Mark Twain had made popular with his *Innocents Abroad* two years earlier. Not but that there had been a colloquial tradition in American poetry before, as witness Holmes's verses and Lowell's *Biglow Papers*. But Pike County was something new, something rude and western, unvarnished, a kind of declaration of independence against the poetry of New England Brahmanism and the "albuminous Victorians." John Hay in a few evenings turned out six of these ballads, and quit. Bret Harte did a few more, and quit. Then, ashamed of what they had done, both tried to be Longfellows, which neither could be, and the genre which was their forte and their one chance for fame in poetry, had to be developed by other hands. Yet their Pike County Ballads had in them something fresh and original. They enshrined the middle-westerner of swamps and ague, of chewing tobacco and whiskers, a man hard, practical, shrewd, with the humor of exaggeration strongly in his

blood, and though often a very hard swearer and gambler, a fellow whose heart was, he thought, in the right place, able to die in a burning steamer to save his passengers, or to protect a "nigger" against a mob that would ride him out of town.

The Pike of course was down on Boston, spoke his own dialect, and proud of it, and was in general a very admirable person. It should be added that he read the Bible and was orthodox in religion.

Of these poems, Harte's "The Heathen Chinee" was the most popular, perhaps the most popular single poem published in these fifty years in America. Would you know why? It is a little hard to say. To be sure, the story of two gamblers who were tricked by the guileless Chinaman "in a game he did not understand," is amusing enough. The crisp metre helps, too, to give it almost epigrammatic vigor. And that he should have twenty-four packs of cards up his sleeves is impossible in just the right sort of way. One likes the poem. But why such enormous vogue? It is a mystery. "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd" has been a mere nothing compared with it!

However, Harte was not always a Pike or insipid. Once he had the luck to achieve something better. The pensive languor of the fading Spanish civilization in California, he was to touch sweetly, solemnly, and with a truly poetic cadence in "The Angelus," his one true poem.

The Angelus

(Heard at the Mission Dolores, 1868)

Bells of the Past, whose long-forgotten music
Still fills the wide expanse
Tingeing the sober twilight of the Present
With colour of romance:

I hear you call and see the sun descending
On rock and wave and sand,
As down the coast the Mission voices blending
Girdle the heathen land.

Within the circle of your incantation
No blight nor mildew falls;
Nor fierce unrest, nor lust, nor low ambition
Passes those airy walls.

Borne on the swell of your long waves receding,
I touch the farther Past—
I see the dying glow of Spanish glory,
The sunset dream, and last

Before me rise the dome-shaped Mission towers
The white Presidio;
The swart commander in his leathern jerkin,
The priest in stole of snow.

Once more I see Portala's cross uplifting
Above the setting sun;
And past the headland northward slowly drifting,
The freighted galleon.

O solemn bells whose consecrated masses
Recall the faith of old,
O tinkling bells that lulled with twilight music
The spiritual fold!

Your voices break and falter in the darkness,
Break, falter, and are still;
And veiled and mystic, like the Host descending,
The sun sinks from the hill!

It is a poem that sounds far off and sweetly, a faint echo as from a land of dreams. Yet so far as I know it has been little admired; Stedman in his Anthology doesn't even quote it. In 1871, it would seem, the country wished to hear from Pike County only.

Though Harte's humorous narratives had a more literary finish than Hay's ballads had, they were less authentic, less documentary. Jim Bludso's grim promise on the burning Prairie Belle, to

". . . . hold her nozzle again the bank
Till the last galoot's ashore,"

and the old fashioned democrat's threat, that if one of you touches the boy,

"He'll wrastle his hash tonight in hell
Or my name's not Tilmon Joy,"

and the astonishing genius that could devise for Little Breeches, this mixture,

"And I'd larnt him ter chaw terbacker
Jest to keep his milk-teeth white,"

could have come only from the direct observation of and by a native—which Harte was not. Hay's humor and honest humanity—even though crude—

is in its way admirable. But when the secretary to Lincoln returns from his wander-jahr abroad and begins

> "I stand at the break of day
> In the Champs Elysées,"

one wishes that the muse of American poetry had kept him at home!

Harte and Hay still live in popular consciousness, but not, one is glad to report, Charles G. Leland, whose *Hans Breitmann Ballads,* first published after an unusually salutary delay of fourteen years, in 1870, enshrine the vulgar German-American in verse often recited, laughed at, and sold. The most popular of these, "Hans Breitmann's Barty," runs at its best like this,

> "Hans Breitmann gife a barty,
> I vent dere you'll be pound;
> I valzet mit Matilda Yane,
> Und vent shpinnen' round und round.
> De pootiest Fraulein in de house,
> She vayed 'pout dwo hoondred pound,
> Und efery dime she gife a shoomp
> She make de windows sound."

The thing of terror that the early Main Street "entertainer" able to recite a lot of this to an assembled company, or of his version of "Die Lorelei," as "de maidens mit nodings on," might become, is too solemn to contemplate, and goes far to resign one to having been born so late as to miss the period of reconstruction altogether.

II

The Old Homestead

The rudeness of the boisterous Pike, or comical German, poetry of the unshaven male, was not domesticated enough to please all firesides. A sweeter, feminine counterpart was needed, and supplied. The most popular poet of the 70's was Will Carleton (1845-1912), the sale of whose books ran to almost a million, and who was the forerunner of his literary twin of the next decade, the great Hoosier, James Whitcomb Riley (1849-1916). From the point of merit these men are the least considerable of the group of the Vulgar Balladists. Yet they were easily the most celebrated. Both are sentimental, homely poets, whose greatest tribute is a tear. Both dote on reminiscence, Out of the Old House, Nancy; The Good Old-Fashioned People; When Uncle Doc Was Young; The Boys of the Old Glee Club; The Old Swimmin' Hole; An Old Sweetheart of Mine. Both delight in showing how boys who smoke and swear abandon their mothers to the poor-house, as in Riley's "Philiper Flash,"

> "His excellent mother I think I was told
> Died from exposure and want and cold,
> And Philiper Flash
> With a horrible slash
> Whacked his jugular open and went to smash."

And Carleton's "Over the Hill to the Poor House" is even more harrowing. Though not farmers themselves, both appeal to the small town, old-homestead instincts, to the belief that good is good and evil is evil, and that the simple things are best. Such sentiments they spice with humor of a mild order, like that of Carleton's "Gone With a Handsomer Man," and Riley's "That Other Maud Muller," an early "gold-digger," who "raked the Judge instead of the hay." Without power of distinction in phrase or of sensuous appeal in image, they mention the well known accessories of the average "place," apple blossoms, Christmas trees, frost on the pumpkin, fodder in the shock, fond memories, joyous birds, dew that drips from out a lily's laughing lips, warmest tears, that City's golden gates, seas of gold, arms of night, etc. Neither ever seems to desire to gild the lily or add a glory to the rose. The poetical "cannery" is, like the old time religion, quite good enough.

It was their desire to write colloquial poems, and of a dramatic nature, to be read at country schools, or chautauquas, or sewing circles, and both, I surmise, consciously avoided saying anything that would be unintelligible to a child of say the sixth or seventh grade. Perhaps the most irritating cause of their banality was their attempt to babify the language, and in Riley especially speak in a dialectic jargon which I believe that even "powerful uneducated persons" would hesitate to inflict on their offspring.

"An' I, An' 'en, a-plowin', a-doin', jes up an', jes' the bossest pair o' babies 'at a mortal ever saw, I ist only want my Ma, they is, I bet! 'cause ef; an' 'en I say my name aint *'Nibsey'* neever; he uz skeered; he git wite clos't to the little Boy, w'y, nen; an' et 'em bofe." If it be true that certain intolerable children did speak that way—though I don't believe that they did—I for one hold it not honesty to have it set down.

But to close an ungrateful theme. Let us look at Riley at his worst and at his best. His errors in taste I am afraid often approached the limit which he set in the "threnody" that follows, though I cannot now set my hands on anything which he did that I think worse. Only Will Carleton's poem based on the cry of Mrs. Garfield at the attempted assassination of her son, "Why Did They Kill My Baby," deserves to rank with it.

"When Our Baby Died,
My Ma she ist cried an' cried!
Yes 'n' my Pa *he* cried, too—
An' I cried—an' me an' you.
An' I 'tended like my doll
She cried too—an' ever'—all
O ist *ever'body* cried
When our baby died!

When our baby died—
Nen I got to took a ride!
An' we all ist rode an' rode
Clean to Heav'n where baby goed,

Mighty nigh! An' nen Ma she
Cried ag'in—an' Pa—an' me—
All but ist the *angels* cried
When our baby died!

That of course is very "sweet," and for folks who like that kind of poem, it is, as Lincoln said, just the kind of poem that they like. Let us turn, however, from these bold bad persons and as Matthew Arnold would say, delight ourselves with a draught of Riley at his sanest and soundest. The friendly reticence and dignity of the following shows him at his best.

A Parting Guest

What delightful hosts are they
Life and Love!
Lingeringly I turn away
This late hour, yet glad enough
They have not withheld from me
Their high hospitality.
So with face lit with delight
And all gratitude, I stay
Yet to press their hands, and say,
"Thanks!—So fine a time! Good night."

But another poem of this quality he did not pen. Had he done so, he might have appealed permanently to men of taste, and have won a fame of more lasting duration than that of the sign-boards which in his youth he was accustomed to paint up and down the roadsides of his own Indiana.

III

The Newspaper Wits

Yet the staggers and the careless lapse of youth and ignorance was after all chiefly a frontier interlude. With the railroads, and the telegraph, and a metropolitan news service, a change could not but come, and it was the newspaper that brought it about. Eugene Field (1850-1896), the famous wit and columnist of his day, whom B. L. T. delighted to honor as his predecessor, won a more deserved and a more enduring fame in the hearts of lovers of light verse than Riley or Carleton. The possessor of humor and kindliness and charm, he writes a series of child poems sane and delicate enough to deserve a place by Stevenson's *Child's Garden of Verse,* which moded like Lamb's *Dream Children,* is the masterpiece in this manner. Little Boy Blue, which won him his fame; Wynken, Blynken, and Nod; In the Firelight, and The Dinkey-Bird, yield a delight that is human and child-like without being mawkish. Field understood admirably the art of reserve. His humor, too, was of a more genuine sort than Riley's, and has acted as a preservative for his sentiment. "The Lyttel Boy" is for instance inimitable in its combination of the staid old English ballad manner with a quite modern domestic matter.

"Some time there ben a lyttel boy
That wolde not renne and play,
And helpless like that little tyke
Ben allwais in the way.
"Goe, make you merrie with the rest,"
His weary moder cried;
But with a frown he catcht her gown,
And hong until her side."

"The Bibliomaniac's Prayer," and "Dibdin's Ghost," reveal his art in light humorous vers de société, and show us the collector's master passion warring delightfully with such hindrances as bank accounts and wives. "Echoes from the Sabine Farm" are neatly turned, and slightly in the manner of Horace, of whom Field was an inspiring disciple. To be sure, Field was not a poet of great volume and not all that he did is up to the level of the poems mentioned. Yet he was an honest poet, now and then a gay poet, and sometimes, as in "The Wanderer," catching a faint but true echo of the great tides of life and song.

"Upon a mountain height, far from the sea,
I found a shell,
And to my listening ear the lonely thing
Ever a song of ocean seemed to sing,
Ever a tale of ocean seemed to tell.

How came the shell upon that mountain height?
Ah, who can say
Whether there dropped by some too careless hand,
Or whether there cast when Ocean swept the Land,
Ere the Eternal had ordained the Day?

Strange was it not? Far from its native deep
One song it sang—
Sang of the awful mysteries of the tide,
Sang of the misty sea, profound and wide
Ever with echoes of the ocean rang.

And as the shell upon the mountain height
Sings of the sea,
So do I ever, leagues and leagues away—
So do I ever, wandering where I may,
Sing, O my home! sing, O my home! of thee."

Since the days of Field, newspaper poets have achieved even greater vogue, and a list of those in popular favor would be long, and perhaps profitless. Walt Mason's humdrum doggerel written as prose reveals daily to several million readers the shrewd but unpoetic Kansan; James Montague, in a poem a day, manages now and then to rise to a bit more than passing cleverness; and Ella Wheeler Wilcox, spicing the commonplace with the sexual, was able to retain her large circle of syndicated readers for years and years. Edgar Guest, a best-seller to-day in poetry, wins no attention from the compilers of anthologies, and need not detain us. Robert W. Service, the Jack London of the popular ballad, gives us the wild, the crude, and the violent, naked and unadorned, in his *Spell of the Yukon* and *Ballads of Cheechako*. And his *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man* made the war even more horrible than we had thought it. He has, however, some narrative punch;

one reads some of his yarns especially as in the happily humorous "Cremation of Sam McGee," with a good deal of pleasure. What is regrettable about his works is that their sense of social criticism is so slight that, like a badly acted moving picture, they make their tales more plausible satirically than realistically. "The Shooting of Dan McGrew," for instance, makes fun of itself, and can always be trusted for a "rise" from those who do not, with Aristotle, think it inartistic to laugh at painful deformity.

These men, however, are not the real inheritors of Field's public, but columnists like F. P. A. (Franklin P. Adams) and B. L. T. (Bert Leston Taylor), and rhymed reviewers and satirists like Arthur Guiterman and Oliver Herford, and Carolyn Wells. Burdened as many of them are with the demands of quick publication, they yet manage now and then to turn out a ballad or a piece of society verse that is gay and polished and human. Sometimes, as in the case of B. L. T., whose recent death left the whole Middle West without its best breakfast companion, the position held by one of these poets and wits takes on the authority of a mild literary dictatorship, on the whole the most genuine of dictatorships, for it must be won by good sense, distinction of style, some knowledge of the classics, and a taste that is kindly and humane. What publisher, for instance, might not profit from the bitter experience of one of their number, celebrated by B. L. T. in the following squib?

LEFT HANDED IMMORTALITY

"This novel was written between Oct. 1796 and Aug. 1797, and offered to Mr. Cadell, who declined to see the manuscript."
—From the Preface to *Pride and Prejudice.*

"Deathless Cadell! Though long since turned to clay,
Your name lives on with the immortal Jane's.
She sought you one rememberable day,
Humbly and had her labor for her pains.

To you the chance was offered to inscribe
Upon her title-page your lustrous name,
But, true to the traditions of your tribe,
You turned her down, and—gained a lasting fame!"

Or what Freudian, save that the Freudians are beyond humor as they are beyond good and evil, might not hesitate before making it impossible, as B. L. T. shows, to Say It With Flowers? Indeed, *A Line o' Verse or Two*, now alas, out of print, is I presume the best book of light verse written by an American, and one that I for one shall not willingly let die. Its Ballad of Bread Puddynge, To a Passionate Professor, Canopus, The Passional Note, The Dinosaur, to list but a few, make it a gem of wit and pleasure. With his humor there was, too, not infrequently a fresh woodland note that in The White-Throat, Silver Birches, and the following Wood Memories, would grace any garden, Horatian or Eighteenth Century, and that shows a finish and beauty quite beyond any of the others of this group.

Wood Memories

To T. B.—Dedication of *The Pipesmoke Carry*

You too have come the forest way
That wound among the ancient trees
And crossed the open places gay
With asters bending to the breeze;

And light the burden that you bore
Along the frank and smiling road
That led you to the lonely shore
Where Rapture's very self abode.

You too have known the many moods
Of streams that babbled as they ran
Of far, unravished solitudes
Beneath the primal spell of Pan;

Have halted, reverent, on a hill
And felt what speech cannot express—
The "incommunicable thrill"
Of unexpected loveliness.

You too, when owls were on the wing,
Have wakened in the windless wood
And hearkened to the murmuring
Of waters under leafy hood;

Have heard a wakeful sparrow call,
And seen the bees of heaven swarm,
And watched the waning firelight fall
Upon a sleeping comrade's form.

IV

Cowboy and Negro Ballads

Poetry of the people should in some sense be a folk poetry, the product of simple scenes and

easy intercourse. What Riley and Carleton, and Pikers like Hay and Harte, produced, we have seen. They were, after all, but imitators. The plain people themselves in the meantime were not idle, but on unregarded ranches and plantations, were producing an art that knew not that it was art. Recently we have paid some attention to those efforts, and the results have been surprising enough. No discussion of popular ballads would satisfy that omitted to mention the very notable collection of *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (1910) and *Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp* (1919), which Professor John A. Lomax has assembled from a thousand camp-fires in the West and Southwest. Composed, no doubt like the old English and Scottish Popular Ballads, by the untrained, natural out-door group about its work and play, they afford a poetic document of high social and historic merit. To be sure, there is no beauty here to equal

> The cock doth craw, the day doth daw
> The channerin' worm doth chide,

or the

> Last night I saw the young moon
> With the old moon in her arms,

of the English popular ballads. But there is heartiness, rough goodness, manliness, and touches of humor and pathos, that can give any one a hearty meal, and from which several of our poets have

gained and will gain strength to surpass these yarns, as Wordsworth and Coleridge gained power from the English and Scottish ballads. Hay's and Harte's songs of Pike County are narrow and poor compared with the sweep and variety of theme here revealed. Cow punching, drinking, gambling, Mexican and Indian fights, and the war on rattle snakes, jokes on the many wives of Brigham Young, scenes at cowboy dances, and round the camp-fire, songs of loneliness in the great deserts of the range, laments for dead comrades, and celebrations of Jesse James that rival the English love of Robin Hood, are a few of the elements in this western rodeo. The general impression of the typical cowboy which one gets from a reading of these his songs, is one of a fellow resembling a little the typical American that Whitman delighted to honor, a boyish, frank, kindly, rough man of the open, tolerant of others, rejoicing in nature and the little dogies, singing naturally his strong open songs, loving a practical joke, but once your friend, yours till you "cash in your checks." Such men might not have cared for Whitman's poetry; he might not have liked theirs; but I think there is no doubt they would have liked each other.

To be appreciated at their fullest, many of these songs need to be sung, and in the open air of the West. "Whoopee Ti Yi Yo, Git Along Little Dogies," under a Texas or Colorado sky, would delight even the heart of Dr. Johnson himself. "Hell in Texas" has rare skill in verse and humor

and a grand climax; and "Jesse James" or "I'm a Poor Lonesome Cowboy," recited in the melting accents of the South, will conquer the stoniest heart! "O bury me not on the lone prairie" is, however, æsthetically no mean line of poetry, nor is this kindly motto for the volume:

> "What keeps the herd from running,
> Stampeding far and wide?
> The cowboy's long, low whistle,
> And singing by their side."

And to conclude, as is proper, with a Tail Piece,

> "Oh, the cow-puncher loves the whistle of his rope,
> As he races over the plains;
> And the stage driver loves the popper of his whip,
> And the rattle of his concord chains;
> And we'll all pray the Lord that we will be saved,
> And we'll keep the golden rule;
> But I'd rather be home with the girl I love
> Than to monkey with this goddamn'd mule."

A piece which has a freshness and health which one does not notice in the false and simulated literary swearing of the Pike. Certainly the Pike was a low fellow, indeed, compared to this true gentleman of the range, the Western cowboy! A good singer, a good fellow, a good American! Long may he rest in peace! Long may he reign!

Interest in the Lomax ballads may account for the appearance this year of two excellent books of negro verse, one a collection of *Negro Folk Rhymes,*

assembled by Professor T. W. Talley of Fisk University, and the other *The Book of American Negro Poetry,* an anthology of the work of some thirty American negro poets, collected by James Weldon Johnson. Despite the work of so winning a writer as Paul Laurence Dunbar in the latter volume, and much else that is of a high poetic level, I find Professor Talley's collection the more spontaneous, the more interesting, though perhaps not the more significant. For here we see at home, natural, and unspoiled by imperfectly assimilated cultural contacts, the soul of a simple but original and charming race. When shall the negro come into his own, and be known for the poet he is? Is there no gratitude to a folk that has given America Uncle Remus, the spiritual or slave songs, our stop-time dances from the tango on, and the intoxicating vigor of the only original music we have been able to produce? Let us not barbarously sneer at these simple things. They have in them the seeds of life, and are the foundation on which the noblest works of art always rely. Who that has heard a negro cook of the old school—may their tribe increase!—singing at her work, or seen some unspoiled negro Apollo chanting his artless tune as a vendor of watermelons up and down the streets of some Southern city, has been able to avoid the feeling that here is song where song is young, spontaneous joy fresh and inimitable as nature?

The fact that half their art is vocal and physical, sound and motion, robs these Folk Rhymes, even

more than it did the Cowboy Ballads, of much of their charm. And yet who can read this without relish? It is the essence of drama!

RABBIT SOUP

Rabbit soup! Rabbit sop!
Rabbit e't my tunnup top.

Rabbit hop, rabbit jump,
Rabbit hide behin' dat stump.

Rabbit stop, twelve o'clock,
Killed dat rabbit wid a rock.

Rabbit's mine, rabbit's skin,
Dress 'im off an' tak' 'im in.

Rabbit's on! Dance an' whoop!
Makin' a pot o' rabbit soup!

That is in its kind a work of art. Or this, with its picture of the courting young negro.

W'en I wus a liddle boy
  Jes fifteen inches high;
De way I court de pretty gals,
  It make de old folks cry.

De geese swim in de middle pon'
  De ducks fly 'cross de clover.
Run an' tell dem pretty gals
  Dat I'se a-comin' over.

Ho! Marindie! Ho!
Ho! Missindie! Ho!
Ho! Malindie! Ho! my gal!
I'se gwine now to see ole Sal.

Or will some one explain why there is a charm about this version of "Roses are red, violets blue," that the plain Anglo-Saxon original is quite without?

ROSES RED

Rose's red, vi'lets blue.
Sugar is sweet but not lak you.
De vi'lets fade, de roses fall;
But you gits sweeter, all in all.

As shore as de grass grows round de stump,
You is my darlin' Sugar Lump.
W'en de sun don't shine de day is cold,
But my love fer you do not git old.

De ocean's deep, de sky is blue;
Sugar is sweet, an' so is you;
De ocean waves and de sky gits pale,
But my love are true, an' it never fail.

And the book is full of matter on much the same level. Animal life, slave days, camp meetings, endearing little glimpses of family affairs, shrewd judgments, and usually without malice, on the white man, love songs, dance songs, hunting and drinking songs, songs for the nursery, and songs to lighten sorrow and labor—the collection is a mine of such material. It is difficult to imagine reading it without the desire to stop and dance, and take one's pleasure for at least one evening sitting at the door of the cabin of this old Uncle Remus.

But we linger too long over these artless rhymes. And I do not wish to praise them too much, for I

wish to reserve certain cordial words for these other learned negro poets in the book of Mr. J. W. Johnson. Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906), gentlest and most winning of the group, every one knows for his humor and reticence and charm. What popular literature would not a handful of ballads such as the following in his *Lyrics of Love and Laughter* adorn? A Little Christmas Basket, The Colored Band, De Critters' Dance, Encouragement, The Unsung Heroes, Noddin' By De Fire, Reluctance, Li'l Gal, and Little Brown Baby. And he has a hundred of like merit. Yet those who think that Dunbar alone of his race has touched a high level should turn to *The Book of American Negro Poetry* and look at the following poems. First, in the work of the compiler himself, James Weldon Johnson, three poems: Fifty Years, The White Witch, and Brothers. These poems are not included in the modern anthologies, but many lesser verses are. Elevation, nobleness of soul, and the poetic gift of interest, all are here, and they touch a level of emotion not reached by Dunbar. Lyrics that remind one in a minor way of Keats are "Flame-Heart" by Claude McKay, and "Dogwood Blossoms" by George Marion McClellan. And to close the volume, and descend scarcely at all from this high level, one should read "At the Closed Gate of Justice," and "An Indignation Dinner" (two quite opposite views of the oppressed negro), by James D. Corrothers; "The Negro Soldiers" by Roscoe C. Jamison; and finally that delightfully

modern version of an old legend by Alex Rogers, "Why Adam Sinned," "Cause Adam never had no lovin' mammy." If you do not then pay tribute to this group of American poets, consult your bias against a race, for their merit is, it seems to me, undeniable.

So much for praise, and I do not believe that I shall be accused of underpraising this popular group of humorous, pathetic, and sentimental poets. Every one enjoys and should enjoy some of their poems. Yet even so, it is well to maintain a certain reserve toward them, and to keep in mind the world of profundities which these poets do not touch. Because of their humor, a sense in which they are so soundly national—for where if not in a humorous optimism shall we look for the religion of the average American—they make an immediate appeal. And Whitman's lack of humor has no doubt hindered him greatly in winning his way. Yet here, too, it is easy to be deceived. One may be more American without humor than with it, and one may pay as our popular balladists did, too high a price for its possession. And the best criticism of their limitations is found in the heroes they admired. In the Pike, in Breitmann's Germans, in the sentimental farmers of Riley and Carleton, in the cowboy, the Klondike miner, and even in the negro minstrel, we see an

American institutionalized, and domesticated. In morals, men are Puritans, or wicked because they are not (no other view seems possible); in sex, there is sentiment but not passion, and love-making is either humorous or simpering; in religion, there is orthodoxy, and the goodness of attending church; and in nature, there are objects that are pretty, or useful, or amusing, but never spiritual, or luminous, or divine. Of Whitman's cosmic outlook on man and nature, of his divine pity, Homeric scenes, his liberation of the emotions, his truly human democracy, there is hardly a trace. Such passions were, indeed, too elemental, too profound. They express what America meant and means to her great souls, her Lincolns, Emersons, Franklins, and apparently only to them. Certainly it is too much to expect of a Pike, or a cowboy, or simple farmer of the Riley school, any such plumbing of the depths of life and of our national consciousness.

Yet granting these things, and allowing for them, the field of the popular ballad and of light verse is no field to despise. Some sentimentalists like Carleton and Riley it is well quietly to ignore. But in the hands of better men, of poets like Field, or B. L. T., or Paul Laurence Dunbar, or in the field of folk creation, of cowboy and negro ballads and songs, one may find fresh life and natural expression. Our poets can learn many things here, the value of chanting and bodily motion, the intimate relation of art to life and all man's activities, and the surprising re-

sponse that poetry which is dramatic in this elemental sense will receive from any audience, cultivated or otherwise. In the chants of Vachel Lindsay and in the present day popular performances of Lew Sarret, with his new Indian songs and narratives, we have two conspicuous examples of the success to be garnered from this seemingly unpromising field.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERIOD OF RECONSTRUCTION

1870-1890

Sidney Lanier, Joaquin Miller, and the Minor Victorians

"Now westward, look, my country bids good-night,—
Peace to the world from ports without a gun."

CHAPTER THREE

THE PERIOD OF RECONSTRUCTION

CRITICS who speak of the period of reconstruction usually speak ill of it. The carpet baggers; the Whiskey Ring; a sickening amount of corruption in politics, from Vice-Presidents, Ambassadors, Governors, and Cabinet officers, to mention no more; and in business the founding of great monopolies by war profiteers who stayed home to get rich while better men who had saved the country were, as to-day, alas, only too poor!—and the list could be impressively extended. Yet despite these worms at the root of the tree, somehow the tree grew. It was after all a period of reconstruction, though the growth was often unapparent. The railroads were going west, and giving us possession of the frontier, now definitely not to be a slave frontier; banks were becoming national; in our institutions was to be noted centralization, in government, in industry, and in education—the land-grant colleges having been approved by Lincoln; and in our literature a tendency away from sectionalism, a tendency toward realism, and toward more national expression. The great vogue of Mark Twain was due not

only to his humor, but to the fact that he was a robust voice, felt to be, as Roosevelt was later, a typical American, and so showing us all what we would be if we could.

In New England their great group of writers was still in its noon, but the afternoon of its decline though slightly felt was nevertheless on it. In the South, a region always no more than sporadically vocal, a great silence had settled, and the time of the healing of wounds was hardly at hand. And south and west the great task was a material one, to settle the new country, to restore the ruined old one. On the face of things, therefore, one would not expect it to have much to say in rhyme. And this, not solely because it was a period of depressing corruption in politics and business, nor because it was materialistic, nor cynical. Poets are not so easily dissuaded. But chiefly because one would expect to see the best brains intrigued by the physical necessities, by the glory of doing things, and conquering the unconquered. Many of the best Americans were so intrigued. And yet, somehow, I do not take much stock in this explanation either. The chief reason why we had no more good poetry than we had from 1870 to 1890 was very likely that no poets were alive who could write it. Had they been alive, I do not think the period would have stopped them. The historical method as an explanation of these things can be easily overdone. And I am the more convinced of this in that the only two original poets

we did produce came from just those materialistic unpromising regions, the West and the South. What, then, did they find to express?

I

Sidney Lanier and the South

Let us discuss first the work of Sidney Lanier, the poet of the South, who saw five years of the war and lost his health in a northern prison. Born in 1842 in Macon, Georgia, educated at a small and inadequate southern university, where nevertheless he made some friends and had his love of music and literature stimulated, he was to be hurled into the war at nineteen. Sickened by its brutality, though he liked its days in the open, and never, so far as one can discover, more than tepidly interested in its political implications, he spent the rest of his life, from 1865 to 1881, in an attempted spiritual and physical reconstruction, striving to recapture his health and the sunny promises of his youth. Until 1872, he tried clerking, taught school a little, and worked in his father's law office. Marrying in that year, he was soon a victim of tuberculosis, and his pathetic fight with that and with constant poverty, and his refusal to yield an inch in his cultivation of poetry and music must win the admiration of all who prefer the spirit to the flesh. For he fought gloriously. Playing the flute in the Peabody Symphony Orchestra

in Baltimore, and keeping the wolf from the door by writing descriptive advertising for railroads! he yet found time in spite of ever recurring periods of illness, to read widely, write two learned books, one on the novel and one on *The Science of English Verse*, to become a lecturer in English literature at Johns Hopkins University, and to produce in the seven years thus granted him, what John Macy calls the only book of American poetry fit to be mentioned with Whitman and Poe. Surely only genius that is heroic can so persevere.

What then may we expect from this bed-ridden scholar and artist? Complaint, wailing, gloomy reports from some city of dreadful night? Not at all! But joy in nature, aspiration toward an ideal in human nature, and in the world of art and religion, an exhilaration, a solace, a hope. In many ways like Whitman's report, it is more æsthetic, but less robust. Yet like Whitman, he is optimistic, has faith in science as the hand-maiden of humanity, sings gladly in his "Psalm of the West" of America's destiny among the nations, and though hating and attacking the greed of Trade, wishes to see industry humanized, and put to work for the benefit of all the people. Pretty good Americanism that, for a Georgian but ten years out of a war of secession!

Yet it is not for his nationalism, nor his faith in science, nor his optimistic hope that hate and greed can finally be won over to serve man's best needs, that we celebrate him. We may admire these quali-

ties, but they are not the chief elements of his poetry. Nor do we need to be blind to his faults in character, his irreproachable Sir Galahad intolerance, and his narrowness in demanding of others, as in "The Crystal," his own sterile chastity of spirit. And in his poetry, his too intricate verse patterns, excessive use of the word "sweet," and constant ringing of the changes on "music and art, soul and love, art and music, love and spirit," are obvious faults, faults which Mr. Howard M. Jones has with perhaps a little too eager a malice collected and set down in the recent Boynton collection of American Poetry. One may grant him all these flaws, and care as little as Mr. Jones does for Lanier's conceits, and unpleasant vine and bee images; but when the highest praise this Chicago critic can afford him is that in one of his poems he "is better than Whittier," and "has the toughness and spiritual resiliency of William Vaughn Moody," one is moved rather strenuously to disagree. No poet is cherished for his faults, it should be needless to say; and there are few poets whose failures could not be set down to look very formidable and impressive. In our moods of irritation with a poet as with a friend, we may like to see his faults conned by rote for all to hear; and we may at such a time feel grateful to the critic who thus gives expression to our ill-will. But such a mood ought not and will not prevail. And it is difficult to see how and why such a mood could for long prevail against Lanier at his happiest and ten-

derest. For his charm, once it is sensed, is, within the limits which it compasses, irresistible.

Let us then eliminate from our consideration his poorer poems; let us even admire with one auspicious and one dropping eye such poems as The Crystal, The Symphony, The Psalm of the West, and even that last astonishing poem, famous as it is, and written at the very door of death, "Sunrise." And let us call the roll of those poems not to be questioned: The Marshes of Glynn, Song of the Chattahoochee, The Revenge of Hamish, and Corn, for the longer poems; and add to them as a group of shorter and in their kind perfect lyrics, Evening Song, A Ballad of Trees and the Master, The Stirrup Cup, Tampa Robins, Marsh Song—At Sunset, and The Mocking Bird, and we will have a little volume of some twenty-five to thirty pages, choice enough to furnish forth any poet to immortality. In these poems, and I shall confine my attention mostly to them, nature is the dominant theme in about half; and in the others, humanity itself in love, death, religion, and revenge. Let us review hastily these finer works.

Lanier has been called the poet of the marshes, a nature poet, and with marvellous interweaving of melody and image in "The Marshes of Glynn" does he give us the glooms of live oaks, and colonnades where lovers wander, a sense of vine, and marsh grass, and watery sods with the marsh hen building, the sound of wings and the sense of great dim birds that haunt about these covered recesses. Cool,

sweet, and calm are these mighty, liberal marshes, and yet mysterious and immense, with a million subtle affinities with the sea and sky, suggesting space and freedom and God. And so he wanders through them as through a great cathedral, hearkening to its organ voices, and hushed to awe by the serenity and beauty of its mysterious divinity. And in like manner he is moved by the sight of a hurrying river rushing to the sea, to think of life and its downward driving urges, and its ultimate ocean waiting beyond. In "The Song of the Chattahoochee," we have instead of the marshes, the river speaking, and its hurry and rush and liquid flow and fall building themselves subtly into the metre, and giving it a diversity and restlessness as of life itself. The technique here is worthy of Swinburne, but the matter is superior, the ecstasies being something more than æsthetic in their religious and spiritual purity.

Or if we would see Lanier's supremacy in another field, let us turn to his vision of the South restored through agriculture, that most poetic of American odes, the one entitled "Corn." Look for a moment at its incongruous elements, the bad banking and cotton farming of the South, the discussion of Wall Street's bulls and bears, a gashed and unkempt hill with a falling mill on it, fields of rough and stubbles of corn, and then see what a delicate, virile, velvet texture, alive and growing he has contrived to weave out of these incongruities. Then by way of contrast, turn if you will for a moment to Lowell's famous

"Commemoration Ode," written eight years before, an ode eloquent and able, whose sentiments we all admire, and some of which, such as the lines on Lincoln, and the "O Beautiful, My Country," has passed into popular speech, and note that in spite of all this, it is not, compared with the truly lyrical, a great ode, not save for patriotic and local reasons, a permanent ode. One may try, and he may rouse his emotions as he will, but he cannot give it wings; somehow it does not rise. One turns to Keats's "Ode to Autumn" and begins,

> "Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,"

and the miracle is accomplished; he is in the upper air, a region that Lowell despite his morality and weightiness and patriotism could not compass. Now it is this region that Lanier when he is at his best inhabits, the region of lyric ecstasy. We feel it despite minor flaws, pulsing in beauty through the metres of his poem "Sunrise," and we feel it again in this poem of the ruined South, "Corn," from the graceful

> ". . . mosses, ferns and flowers shy
> That hide like gentle nuns from human eye
> To lift adoring perfumes to the sky,"

on to the final glimpse of the ruined Georgia mountain, the

> ". . . gashed and hairy Lear,
> Whom the divine Cordelia of the year,
> E'en pitying Spring, will vainly strive to cheer."

He is a lyric poet, then, in whom nature and religious elation mingle beautifully. But he does not, as lyric poets often do, have to pay for this sweetness by loss of strength. His ballad, "The Revenge of Hamish," is forceful and dramatic enough, a tale full of brutality, color, grim revenge, and beauty. Its wild cruelty, and poetic justice rise forcefully to the bloody lashing of the master, and then swiftly and unexpectedly to the real climax, the death of the child, and the blank of horror and the ironic hush of nature at the end. It thrills with dramatic action and with a narrative strength that Browning does not often surpass.

The half dozen lyrics which I have mentioned show in varying ways some of Lanier's other qualities. The lyric "Marsh Song—At Sunset,"

> "Over the monstrous shambling sea,
> Over the Caliban sea,"

is distinguished for movement and its Tempest-like allusion and atmosphere. "The Mocking Bird," after a description of his bird-like thaumaturgy of song, notices the god "twitch in a grasshopper," and concludes surprisingly, but unforgettably,

> "Sweet Science, this large riddle read me plain;
> How may the death of that dull insect be
> The life of yon trim Shakespeare on the tree?"

"Tampa Robins," fairly burns with color, and the reader is himself for the time this bird of "sunlight, song, and the orange tree," and sings with him,

"Burn golden globes in leafy sky,
My orange planets: crimson I
Will shine and shoot among the spheres,
(Blithe meteor that no mortal fears)
And thrid the heavenly orange tree
With orbits bright of minstrelsy."

"The Stirrup Cup," brave in the face of all too certain death, has the tonic medicinable flavor of one of Emerson's epigrams in verse, combined with the thickness of some exotic black and red wine, that drops with the beauty and terror of blood.

THE STIRRUP CUP

Death, thou'rt a cordial old and rare:
Look how compounded, with what care!
Time got his wrinkles reaping thee
Sweet herbs from all antiquity.

David to thy distillage went,
Keats, and Gotama excellent,
Omar Khayyam, and Chaucer bright,
And Shakespeare for a king delight.

Then, Time, let not a drop be spilt:
Hand me the cup whene'er thou wilt;
'Tis thy rich stirrup-cup to me;
I'll drink it down right smilingly.

"A Ballad of Trees and the Master" shows us his worship of Christ, the man of perfect gentleness and sorrow and peace, and it casts this worship into the murmurings of the trees themselves, thus making use of the well-known legend. Space forbids quota-

tion, and I must save room for one perfect love lyric, passionate as the music of Sappho, and in form and moving how satisfying and tender.

EVENING SONG

Look off, dear Love, across the sallow sands,
And mark yon meeting of the sun and sea,
How long they kiss in sight of all the lands.
Ah! longer, longer, we.

Now in the sea's red vintage melts the sun,
As Egypt's pearl dissolved in rosy wine,
And Cleopatra night drinks all. 'Tis done,
Love, lay thine hand in mine.

Come forth, sweet stars, and comfort heaven's heart,
Glimmer, ye waves, round else unlighted sands.
O night! divorce our sun and sky apart,
Never our lips, our hands.

A good deal more could easily be made of Lanier's life, his high-mindedness, his musical powers and their influence on his poetry and metres, of the struggle without learned friends, and of his lack of contact most of his life with any literary group, or any spirits who were his equals; and these things would add to our astonishment at what he achieved and to our pity that he should die so soon. Though he was the voice of no great national force, he was not, as we have seen, altogether out of the current of American life. On the whole, however, he was an artist, and by temperament and health forced a good deal to draw on inner sources for his power. He avoided, however,

the sick-man's outlook, and like Stevenson retained his spiritual health to the last. He was not, to be sure, so gay as Stevenson, and one misses in him as in so many Southern gentlemen, the large daring and democratic confidence in life which made Stevenson at home in all times and a brother to any man with a zest for life. It is to be noted that he did to compensate have an exaltation superior to Stevenson's. From Texas he writes in a letter to his wife:

"Were it not for some circumstances which make such a proposition seem absurd in the highest degree, I would think that I am shortly to die, and that my spirit hath been singing its swan song before dissolution. All day my soul hath been cutting swiftly into the great space of the subtle, unspeakable deep, driven by wind after wind of heavenly melody. The very inner spirit and essence of all wind-songs, bird-songs, passion-songs, folk-songs, country-songs, sex-songs, soul-songs, and body-songs, hath blown upon me in quick gusts like the breath of passion, and sailed me into a sea of vast dreams, whereof each wave is at once a vision and a melody."

This very spiritual exaltation of his, fine as it was, contrived at times to be a source of narrowness and exclusion. He did not, for instance, see largely enough to include Whitman in his liking, though it is to be noted that he has Whitman's mystical view of man in nature, even if he has it thinned down and refined. A shock or so of Whitman's vigor and rudeness might have given him an opulence he lacked. Essentially both were spirits of refinement and hated the dirty or the coarse—only Whitman's is a more

inclusive refinement. Tragedy, struggles, and limitations aside, Lanier was genius enough in his best work to endure royally and by his own right. He has not had the vogue his merits deserve. Not a poet who will encircle the globe, not like Whitman the voice of a continent magnificently speaking, his is rather the treble hautboy of some fine symphony, piping like Pan fresh notes of an earlier and sweeter world. In such a world none of us wish to live constantly, but it is good now and then to ascend the mountain of which Lanier is the presiding deity, and inhale a draught of the high thin air and listen to his sweet piping and playing.

II

Joaquin Miller and the West

Lanier was a refined spirit and carried with him in all his activities the subtlety of soul, the almost religious æstheticism of a recluse in whom art and nature and God mingle as one. These are qualities of an older civilization, castled like the poetry of Rossetti and Swinburne on age after age of polishing, chiselling, and refining. And though his marshes are alive and growing, their glooms and sweeps are but more natural decorations than is usually found in a nineteenth century Palace of Art. Joaquin Miller was a looser, a more natural writer than Lanier; by no means so subtle, or so elevated, or polished,

he was more gorgeous, more exotic, master of a wild tropical beauty and of a bronzed and naked majesty of physique more opulent and dramatic than anything in Lanier. To read him is to journey west into the land of the sundown seas, a region of purple hills, snow-clad and wild; of honest and considerate red men; of gold diggers and adventurers—a region lawless and alone but nourishing at its breast women of wild and gorgeous beauty, and heroes of bronze with hearts of gold and bodies lithe and supple as the spring of a panther. Careless and even obscure as he often is in technique, he repays reading for his sense of the picturesque, for his dynamic revelations of nature, and for his ability to portray our national stream of life flowing into these weird regions of beauty and wonder, with many a tragic tale of pity and terror told by the way.

Miller's life was itself an epitome of the epic of the West. Not like Whitman a mere observer, a caresser of life, he lived in seventy-two years through enough experiences to furnish another Homer with tales for a new and greater Troy. Born in Indiana in 1841 in a prairie schooner pointed west, the son of generous-souled Quaker pioneers, his father a teacher and rancher who would never permit a gun about his place, Joaquin Miller learned early to attain independence in life in the open. Kindness to the Indians seems with his family to have begot kindness, and they were several times kept from starving by these savages. When the poet was

eleven, the family took the six months' hard trip to Oregon, swimming and rafting the deep rivers, and daring the dangers of the trackless mountains. At thirteen, Miller ran away to the mines in California, cooked for a time for an outfit of twenty-eight gold diggers, fought against the Indians, and got shot through the neck and face by an arrow. While temporarily insane from this wound, he was, in an Indian massacre, the only one of his eighteen companions to be spared, the reason being that the Indians revered an insane person as divine. Wandering south at the age of fifteen or sixteen, he went, so he tells us, with Walker on one of his filibustering expeditions to Nicaragua where he saw hard fighting in the tropics. Then home, to work for his living and take a degree at Columbia College, Oregon, in 1858. From then until 1870, he was among other things, an express rider through the Idaho gold fields; an editor of a newspaper in Eugene, Oregon, till it was closed for its anti-Civil War bias; from 1866 to 1870 a federal judge in Oregon, and incidentally an aspiring poet. When he was twenty-nine, California refused his poetry; so he went East, and meeting a similar fate with New York and then London publishers, finally printed one hundred copies of his *Songs of the Sierras* in London at his own expense. He woke to be dubbed the Oregon Byron, and like Byron to find himself famous. That is, he was famous in England. He has never been so in America save as a somewhat

eccentric Western poet of picturesque dress and rhapsodic declamatory manner. His poem "Columbus" has been much admired, but in general he still awaits final appraisal.

It is of course beyond the scope of these few pages to attempt a definitive criticism of Miller. That has been adequately done by Mr. Stuart P. Sherman in his recent edition of the poet's works. What I wish to do here is to point out merely a few of the more characteristic of his qualities with the hope to tempt the reader to go read and enjoy him. If one is asked to select his best work, he will find himself selecting about the same poems and pieces of poems that Professor Boynton cites in his *Anthology of American Poetry*. But he will also, I suspect, find himself regretting having to make any selection at all; for Miller is not chiefly a poet of brief snatches and eminently quotable lyrics. Much of his virtue must be gained, like an acquaintance with a good friend or with his own western mountains, by long intimacy and somewhat sustained effort. And I suspect that it is this fact, that his virtue is diffuse, a virtue that only gradually accumulates as one reads his longer narrative paintings, that has cut him off from a larger circle of readers. Certainly he suffers under no such disabilities as Whitman labored to overcome, for his verse forms are quite conventional; he tells a story usually; and his morals, like those of the Mikado, have been declared particularly correct.

And first let us say as a nationalist, or as an internationalist, Miller is of very limited importance. His view of America was that of an early Westerner almost exclusively. It was to him a huge aggregate of nomadic, brave, noble-hearted pioneers, who had pulled up stakes and gone West for glory and for gold, and who deserved to have both showered on them abundantly. A few, he tells us, were greedy and mean, but most were of generous, open natures, the best friends and neighbors and nation-builders under the sun. His men are naïve, strong, and good; his women patient, noble, capable, often weeping for weariness and loneliness, but in general uncomplaining and glad to follow their husbands out West. It is easy to see, however, that the romance of it was more to the men than to the women. Internationally, too, his notions seem to stop short. Burns and Byron were his great heroes, they and the Pre-Raphaelites and Browning, who were kind to him. On his trip to England in 1870, he mentions that "a lot of Germans going home to fight filled the ship; a hard rough lot, and they ate like hogs," but he seems not otherwise to have cared about them or their bloody business. William Walker, who was an American adventurer who desired to extend the United States to Panama, was to him one of the noblest of men, because he was stern and kind and bold, one of Miller's typical heroes. The idea of the rights of nations, or of the value of institutions, seems not to have impressed him. He looked on a

specific and personal world, on a natural and unformed world, but not on a world of organized groups, or of institutional classes or clashes. In such a world it may be said that he had no loyalties and no prejudices.

The view of nature in his poetry strongly resembles the sentimental naturalism of the early romantic school, a nature having Byron's force and a more gorgeous and tropical beauty than his scenes had, but lacking the Titanic malice and emotional virulence of *Don Juan*. Everything in Miller's scenes is touched with beauty and with wonder. Could any one, for instance, be frightened in the presence of this opulent creature in Nicaragua?

"What snakes! long, lithe, and beautiful
As green and graceful boughed bamboo.
How they did twine them through and through
Green boughs that hung red-fruited full!
One, monster-sized, above me hung,
Close eyed me with his bright pink eyes,
Then raised his folds and swayed and swung,
And licked like lightning his red tongue,
Then oped his wide mouth with surprise;
He writhed and curved and raised and lowered
His folds, like liftings of the tide,
Then sank so low I touched his side,
As I rode by with my boy's sword,
And trees shook hands high over head,
And bowed and intertwined across
The narrow way, while leaves and moss
And luscious fruit, gold-hued and red,
Through all the canopy of green,
Let not one sun-shaft shoot between."

Miller's nature is in short one vast democracy of beast, flower, snake, and bird, with man the brother of all. It is noticeable in this connection that the poet even from childhood abstained from meat. The facts of nature to Miller are not gross, though it is true that he usually avoids mention of her evil or offensive aspects. He has no Puritan aversion to sex or nakedness, but regards both as natural and pure, much as Walt Whitman did. Lust he is opposed to, but if love is present, passion he thinks sanctifies itself without priest or form. His lovers, it is to be noted, are nature's children, half-naked usually, bronzed by many suns, the men lithe and healthy, and the women always with a wealth of hair sweeping to their feet and half concealing and revealing their perfectly moulded beauty. These natural lovers get most of their charm from being placed in the open air, beside the great trees and mountains of the Pacific coast, and from leading as they do a life of excitement and peril. In a flight from prairie fires, Kit Carson and his bride are saved. But in the "Sea of Fire," a longer and more beautiful narrative, the hero, standing at last on a cliff a mile above the Pacific and holding his princess high above his head, is overtaken by the flames, and standing there nude and majestic as some modern Colossus, and holding his unrobed bride high over his head to keep her out of the flame, they are finally overtaken, and

> ". . . like some lightning-riven tree
> They sank down in that flame—and slept."

It is tragedy, but the tragedy of the picturesque, of man alive and aglow with nature, flame-wrapt within and without; but not the tragedy of the poignant, not, I think, greatly pathetic. Like the pictures of Remington or of Maxfield Parrish, it is poster rather than portrait painting.

A little more deserves to be said of Miller's characters. He has four: a hero, a heroine, a good Indian, and a villain (sometimes red, sometimes white). The villain is the least frequent, and, as in "The Sioux Chief's Daughter," does his dark deed, fails, and is seen no more. The good Indian is calm, honest even at the expense of his own tribe, kind to the good whites, and stern to all evil-doers. He is a noble man of nature, being pushed into the sea by the greed of the whites. In "The Last of the Taschastas," we see such a chief and his daughter forced to depart into the Pacific, turn and suddenly kill the white captain who is banishing them, and then flee away over the waves into the sunset. The hero and heroine we have already described. Walker, Kit Carson, Idaho, and Columbus, different costumes, differing names, are yet all the same person. Strong, lithe, tall, able to die for duty or love, passionate but pure, they are of the stern, kindly, bold, new chivalry of the West. Not cowpunchers, not Pikes, but romantic, full-blooded young men, rich as some golden moon on a tropical night. And the heroine is quite his equal, wild and lovely, natural and pure, a royal companion for her Western lover,

"This Theseus of a nobler Greece
This Jason of the golden fleece."

Romantic love and action, it must be said, is about all one gets out of them. They do no thinking, talk little, and have no philosophy in their natures. But the same might be said of Paris and Helen, and yet one does not notice that the world has taken any the less interest in them, for all that.

"How beautiful she was, why she
Was inspiration! She was born
To walk God's sunlit hills at morn
Nor waste her by this wood-dark sea.
What wonder, then, her soul's white wings
Beat at its bars, like living things.

. . . . . .

Ay, she was as Madonna to
The tawny, lawless faithful few
Who touched her hand and knew her soul:
She drew them, drew them as the pole
Points all things to itself. She drew
Men upward as a moon of spring
High wheeling, vast, and bosom-full,
Half-clad in clouds and white as wool,
Draws all the strong seas following."

That Miller drew much of his inspiration from his reading of the romantic poets as well as from his own West is evident. As early as 1872, it is important to note, he was in correspondence with Walt Whitman, and his views of the health and beneficence of nature, like those of Burroughs and Muir later, were much affected by the greater bard.

In him one may trace without being too fanciful, something of Whitman's gospel of nudity, his love of primitive simple natures, his belief in the natural sanctification of passion. By no means so serious or profound a nature as Whitman, Miller imitates his naturalism and mysticism, though the result is more picturesque than it is deep or spiritual. It was his aspiration to be a voice of joy, a poetical pioneer to express the life of that whole vast region. That certainly he did not accomplish. He had not the soul nor the intellect nor the art. What he did do, however, was to give us a romantic west, beautiful, exciting, and delightful. This was no mean gift to our literature. Certainly he is the greatest poet the West has yet produced, and in him there is many an hour of delight for the reader who does not disdain Cooper, Chateaubriand, the romantic Byron, or Scott. He is a fifth in the group, and merely as a painter, quite the equal of any. Of his shorter poems, it is well to read Columbus, The Missouri (a superb description), Westward Ho, The Passing of Tennyson, The American Ocean, In Men Whom Men Condemn, Adios, The Last Taschastas, Kit Carson's Ride, Picture of a Bull, Crossing the Plains, The Sioux Chief's Daughter; and of his longer poems, With Walker in Nicaragua, The Ship in the Desert, The Sea of Fire, and A Song of Creation.

Joaquin Miller continued to publish poetry until the early part of the present century, but the force of his art was drawn from his early life and reading.

Time added nothing really new to his world, and though living long after Lanier, he was scarcely wider in his interests. Both lived in a dream world; both drew largely on nature for their inspiration and beauty. Miller was more vital, perhaps, more inclusive, less a prig, less afraid of life, and more desirous of really accepting the universe than Lanier. Lanier was more conventionally a Christian poet than Miller, though it is to be pointed out that neither was really orthodox in his view of man and nature. Though spiritual, both were children of this world, building a house of joy in beauty and art and the natural senses. In this they were in accord with the growing time-spirit of their age, and only the fact that they were less opulent, less thorough, less outspoken, kept them from arriving at the consistently sensuous mysticism of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. Lanier disliked Whitman, but it was only his fastidiousness, his respect for convention, that saved him from a like entanglement with the gross world. There is nothing in his philosophy, nor in Miller's either, to teach us how nature may be impure. Whitman was merely consistent, and Lanier was not.

By 1890, the period of reconstruction South was about over, and in the West the railroads had united the country, and the land was becoming rapidly settled. The pioneer stage was passing, and with it we may expect to see vanish some of that western love of action and experiment that had until then been so important a feature of American life and

literature. Intensive cultivation of the arts we may look to see supplanting the cosmic outlook and the drama of man alone and unsubdued in the presence of the unknown which he must conquer.

III

New England and the Albuminous Victorians

> "They seemed to be always pursuing
> The ethical note."

If we glance at the poetry of the East during this period, we will find still untouched by the revolutionary visions of Whitman, the old intensive literary cultivation of the arts. Here, still flourishing, is a whole host of minor poets, capable of a few sweet notes, poets whose highest aim is a neatly turned sonnet to Tennyson, or some ballad to the Venus of Milo. The products of a cultivated society, these poets write about equally well. Indeed it would often be safe to defy the best ear in the world to distinguish the voice of one from that of another. A good deal of their best work one finds embalmed, "coffined with crown and armor on," in Stedman's *American Anthology*. It is poetry composed in the polite world, written at desks, or in parlors, obeying all the rules; poetry with a college education and a good position teaching school, or editing a literary magazine, and settled down for life. Some one has dubbed these writers the albuminous Victorians, and

though that is a just hit at their worst qualities, it does an injustice to some of them. After all, a good poem may now and then be written in a library.

Without saying much of author's lives or of the volume of created work, I wish to mention a few of the poems of these minor imitative writers. Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836-1907), the novelist and former editor of the *Atlantic*, who would have refused to print Kipling's "Recessional" because of what he thought the questionable grammar of "The tumult and the shouting dies," won a too great reputation in his day for his respectable sonnets and ballads. Any good artificer might have written many of them, though his occasional verses, such as his lines on "Sargent's Portrait of Booth," or his "Ode on the unveiling of the Shaw Memorial," or his poem on immigration, "Unguarded Gates," deserve the praise of being perfectly fitted and adapted to their subjects. His verses on Shakespeare are very happy, and strike me as his best. There is finality here if not inspiration, and one gets a real thrill out of this little glimpse of the greatest of poets.

GUILIELMUS REX

The folk who lived in Shakespeare's day
And saw that gentle figure pass
By London Bridge, his frequent way—
They little knew what man he was.

The pointed beard, the courteous mien,
The equal port to high and low,

All this they saw, or might have seen,
But not the light behind the brow.

The doublet's modest gray or brown,
The slender sword-hilt's plain device,
What sign had these for prince or clown?
Few turned, or none, to scan him twice.

Yet 'twas the king of England's kings!
The rest with all their pomps and trains
Are mouldered, half-remembered things—
'Tis he alone that lives and reigns.

The poetry of Emily Dickinson (1830-1886), though not published till after her death (in 1890, '91, and '96), is, as Aldrich her editor says, "poetry of the portfolio," but it deserves a good deal more attention than such a phrase would indicate. It has an Emersonian pith to it, and an intellectual and emotional daring which quite startle one when he considers the mild New England nun, who in her cell in Amherst was thinking these unorthodox things. A little wren of a creature, as she said of herself, she for years never left her own house, saw only a very few friends, and only once a year stepped out into the sunlight of society to preside at her father's reception to the Amherst notables. She was quite content at home with her Tennyson and Emerson and Shakespeare to subtilize and polish verses on Life, Love, Nature, and Time and Eternity, all for her own delight. Even Helen Hunt Jackson (1831-1885), her friend and fellow townswoman,

who got a glimpse of a few of her poems, could not persuade her to publish. Yet she wrote better verses than her better known friend, whose poems with their western pine-wood fragrance still smell fresh and green. The reader who spends a half-hour now and then with these three quiet volumes of Miss Dickinson's will find much to charm and interest and little to cast aside. One predicts permanence for this sly poet. She has many poems quite as delightful as the following, which shows her charm but not her crisp wit or naughty daring.

A Day

I'll tell you how the sun rose—
A ribbon at a time.
The steeples swam in amethyst,
The news like squirrels ran.

The hills untied their bonnets,
The bobolinks begun.
Then I said softly to myself
"That must have been the sun."

. . . . . .

But how he set, I know not.
There seemed a purple stile,
Which little yellow boys and girls
Were climbing all the while.

Till when they reached the other side
A dominie in gray
Put gently up the evening bars,
And led the flock away.

Edward Rowland Sill (1841-1887), a California poet with Eastern training, belongs to this imitative group, but is less inspired than those mentioned above. His "The Fool's Prayer," "Opportunity," and "Five Lives," show his respectable didactic at its average best. Few, I fancy, will care to read him further. Similar to the verses of Miss Dickinson are the brief epigrams of John Bannister Tabb (1845-1909), a fellow prisoner in the Civil War and later close friend of Sidney Lanier. His verses are neat and polished, but lack Miss Dickinson's whimsical waywardness and charm. And one needs but to compare his epigrams with some of Landor's to see how far short of perfection Father Tabb's, even at their best, fall. The lift of the imagination was not in him.

Mention of one or two others in this group of more or less conventional poets will suffice. George Edward Woodbury (1855-) has written a good deal that is readable and smooth, but has seldom attained to anything so good as his stirring sonnets "At Gibraltar," sonnets at once intelligent and imaginative in their outlook on international matters. Who can read these without some stirrings in his blood?

AT GIBRALTAR

I

England, I stand on thy imperial ground,
Not all a stranger; as thy bugles blow,

I feel within my blood old battles flow—
The blood whose ancient founts in thee are found.
Still surging dark against the Christian bound
Wide Islam presses; well its peoples know
Thy heights that watch them wandering below;
I think how Lucknow heard their gathering sound.
I turn, and meet the cruel, turbaned face.
England, 'tis sweet to be so much thy son!
I feel the conqueror in my blood and race;
Last night Trafalgar awed me, and today
Gibraltar wakened; hark, the evening gun
Startles the desert over Africa.

II

Thou art the rock of empire set mid-seas
Between the East and West that God has built;
Advance thy Roman borders when thou wilt,
While run thy armies true with His decrees.
Law, justice, liberty—great gifts are these;
Watch that they spread where English blood is spilt,
Lest mixed and sullied with his country's guilt,
The soldier's life-stream flow and Heaven displease!
Two swords there are: one naked, apt to smite,
Thy blade of war; and battle-storied, one
Rejoices in the sheath, and hides from light.
American I am: would wars were done!
Now westward, look, my country bids good-night—
Peace to the world from ports without a gun!

Lizette Woodworth Reese (186-), the poet of Baltimore, is a lyric singer of pleasing quality. She too has in one sonnet surpassed herself, and will likely win more from immortality with it than with her several volumes. Poetry like this does not grow old.

Tears

When I consider Life and its few years—
A wisp of fog betwixt us and the sun;
A call to battle, and the battle done
Ere the last echo dies within our ears;
A rose choked in the grass; an hour of fears;
The gusts that past a darkening shore do beat;
The burst of music down an unlistening street,—
I wonder at the idleness of tears.

Ye old, old dead, and ye of yesternight,
Chieftains, and bards, and keepers of the sheep,
By every cup of sorrow that you had,
Loose me from tears, and make me see aright
How each hath back what once he stayed to weep:
Homer his sight, David his little lad!

From 1870 to 1890, then, we see the United States in sections: Lanier and Miller each expressing an aspect of American growth, the one the refined and aspiring spirituality of the South, and the other the loose and vigorous democracy of western romantic adventure. But to their own regions they were a good deal confined. And in the East we have the imitators of Longfellow and Tennyson and Emerson still clinging to the traditional in verse form and theme, a refined but, viewed in totality, a rather empty school of manner and polish, a school without national breadth or vigor, and as limited in its library as Lanier was in his South or Miller in his western mountains. To be sure, even so early, the views of *Leaves of Grass* were in some measure having their effect, and in Lanier's mystical marshes, and

Miller's picturesque primitivism, as well as in their yearnings toward a great national and human democracy, there is Whitman's magic at work. Yet in both of them, his larger vision of Americanism is still chiefly a yearning. The world of the cities, of the mills, of railroads, and finance, and technical education, of Methodism, and invention, and hide-bound custom, the world of drudgery, and immigration, and inartistic day-labor, this world the poets of these two decades knew little, or considered little, for of it they give us few hints. They cannot therefore be deemed very inclusive, for with these things from 1870 to 1890, American life in the East and Middle West was largely concerned. Perhaps we cannot blame them for ignoring such a world. Yet in the long run an art that is to succeed will not be content with a sterile aloofness from the life about it. For it is life in just such a lump that art delights to leaven. We come to the conclusion, therefore, that much of the American life of these years was unexpressed in our poetry. What we did produce was regional and not national, and only in their emotional views of man and nature may Lanier and Miller be said to accord with the time-spirit so mystically announced by Whitman.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIN DE SIECLE, VAGABONDIA, AND NATIONALISM

1890-1910

I said in my heart, I am sick of four walls and a ceiling.
I have need of the sky,
I have business with the grass.

CHAPTER FOUR

FIN DE SIECLE, VAGABONDIA, AND NATIONALISM

THE period of reconstruction marked the healing of wounds, the decline of sectionalism and the establishment of the entire American scene as a piece of the national consciousness. Improved travel and communication were a physical assistance, and the Civil War had taught the futility of resisting the national will. California and New England were now in the way of a closer union than had formerly been possible to New York and Virginia. Peace gave the country ease; economic improvements were winning leisure for the successful classes. With a growing nationalism it would be natural to anticipate an added homogeneity of outlook; and with a relaxing quiet might come an entertaining hospitality, and eagerness to hear new things. No doubt such a period might prove less strikingly original, yet in cultivation and finesse, in mere artistry, it should be greatly improved.

And something like this was actually the history of the end of the century. In politics there was McKinley and a brief triumphant adventure in expan-

sion, echoing in the western oceans the imperialism which Kipling was chanting in Africa and the East. Then came Roosevelt and internal reforms, a huge sense of national righteousness and of big important affairs, in which every American had a vital interest; and finally the Panama Canal, and a growing feeling of the romance of international relations and of our destiny abroad.

A less conspicuous, but no less real consolidation and internationalism was the mark of the mental consciousness of these years. Poetry could not escape the contagion, and gave itself over joyously to the national spirit, the national scene, and the contemplation of international exotics, intoxications, exhilarations. The national interests indicated above have been perhaps for the time sufficiently described. What the international offering was, what was the mental and spiritual baggage of European and English poetry at the end of the century, what intoxicants Paris and London held forth to the cultivated American artists who in these years wandered a good deal abroad, it is now pertinent to inquire. What especially in English and French poetry might serve as a new stimulant, or a choice importation to decorate the aspiring verses of a new American art? We have described the national heritage of these poets. The question remains, what were the international possibilities? Let us widen the range of interest and look for a little at this foreign offering, fin de siècle in the Parisian and London shops.

I

Fin de Siècle in France and England

If we look at the 1890's in England, we are met with much talk of decadence, of fin de siècle, of the Yellow-Book School, and of art for art's sake. The characteristic of this world of poets was one of strife, of romantic quest, of an effort to live in some dream world of art or love or sensation sufficient to act as an anodyne to the commercialism or imperialism of the age, or to the limitations and diseases of mortality. Too often this quest merely substituted more complex and stranger diseases for the boredom or satiety they fled from. In the poetry of the English poet Ernest Dowson, for example, we see the tired quest of a soul "surfeited with food that nourishes not," and struggling in the Nessus-shirt of his own self-torturing temperament.

> "I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
> But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
> Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
> And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
> Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
> I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, in my fashion."

And this unattainable nympholeptic quest for the white, unhealthily-pure Cynara, we see repeated in different form in the nemesis that attended on Oscar Wilde's heroes, in his novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* or in his "Ballad of Reading Gaol," where

"All men kill the thing they love
. . . . . .
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword."

This quest of the decade for something that could live up to the demands of the senses and of the imagination, was but the end of the art-for-art's-sake dream of the Pre-Raphaelites, and of Walter Pater's desire to burn each instant fiercely, with a hard and gem-like flame, an end that too often came in insanity, absinthe, the gutter, or in the exhaustions of satiety—what Max Nordau in his famous attack summed up in the word Degeneration. Sometimes, as in the notable poem "The Hound of Heaven," by Francis Thompson, God lays hold on man, and will not let him go until he is safe anchored in the port of Catholic mysticism—certainly the happiest fate to befall one of these disordered mystics or decadents.

"I fled Him down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes, I sped;
And shot, precipitated
A-down Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after."

Or along with the decadents, the religion of beauty school, and the Catholic mystics, we find those who

go to an opposite extreme, who cut off from beauty or the higher realms of the imagination, take refuge either in the doctrinaire wit and worship of the reason of George Bernard Shaw, or in the imperialistic glamour and realism of Kipling's harsh music. And so instead of dying of a rose in aromatic pain, we have some authors decrying romance as sentimental hypocrisy, or exalting the man of action and his dominion over palm and pine and heathen. And these are all, one notices, poets of groups, of movements, and schools; none national and none universal; often exquisite, but never really great, liberating, permanent contributors to the expression of national consciousness or of human life.

Nor is it less so if we turn to the poets of Europe. There too, even more than in England, poetry was devoting itself to movements, to a system of things, to a school of expression. Indeed, much of the poetry of men like Dowson and Wilde drew its sustenance from what is known as The Symbolist Movement in French Poetry, a movement for which Arthur Symons has become the historian for English readers, and which furnished the amusing poets who sat for their portraits recently in Max Beerbohm's stealthy satire *Seven Men* (1920). Gerard De Nerval, the unconscious originator of Symbolism, whose eventual insanity took the amusing form of leading a lobster at the end of a blue ribbon about the Palais Royal because, he said, it did not bark and knew the secrets of the sea; and the others of the group,

Villiers de L'Isle Adam, Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, Jules La Forgue, Mallarme, Huysmans, the Belgian poet Maeterlinck, and the Italian d'Annunzio, were the most significant of the western European poets of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Their symbolism, be it noted in passing, was one of a very loose and inconclusive mysticism, as wild as the insane heroics of d'Annunzio in some; as full of moonlight, passion, and absinthe, as Verlaine's *Fêtes Gallantes* (1869) in others; and ranging from Verlaine's strange sins to the pure, ethereal blues of Maeterlinck's child-like fairy plays.

The theory of these poets is that only in symbols is there truth, beauty, and happiness. Life thus becomes an effort to disregard reality, and to live in the land of dreams, or perhaps to regard reality as itself a land of dreams. In their loves, therefore, they are capricious, following the gleam, seeking like the ancient romantic nympholepts the ideal or dream-woman, and hoping with each new passion to find her embodied in the living reality before them. Needless to say, they were usually disillusioned, their unfortunately real lovers all too frequently having objections to being loved only as sylphs or nymphs. Custom and morality have no place in the kit of most of these poets; nor do they strive to express anything so bourgeois as a national spirit, or a picture of society. To arouse the mystical consciousness, and to use reality or passion or friendship only as the symbol to lead them into the right and visionary state, is

the purpose of the poems and plays and novels of the Symbolists.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Whitman and Poe among American poets should be popular with these writers. The wild world of Poe's poetry, divorced from reality and morals, both of which the Symbolists feared as the Prince of Darkness is reputed to fear holy water; and the mystical vision of Whitman so akin to, though so much more profound and healthy than the Symbolist's mysticism, would be sure to reveal to them glimpses of the dream world which they were seeking. And so in the descendents of the Symbolists we find the more modern French group of the Unanimists quite in Whitman's manner finding the *One* in the *Many,* seeing spirit in all matter, and studying Whitman for their model. It is regrettable that they so seldom attain to his health of spirit, or his representative characteristics, and derive from him chiefly those unhealthy, morbid, erotic qualities, which he kept subordinate and subdued, or which at best he could transfigure and spiritualize.

Symbolism, Catholic mysticism, mysticism of the flesh, decadence, the religion of beauty in art-for-art's-sake, and the rude thumpings of the imperialistic drum, what echo of these things may one expect to hear in American poetry of the nineties and nineteen-hundreds? And at first it is surprising how little was their effect. Not but that some of our poets like Moody and Hovey were conscious of such move-

ments, and read with interest French and English poetry, and even translated into English some of the poems of the Symbolists. Yet they were not during these years greatly moved to imitation, but chose to go their ways affected only a little by these schools, to write as they saw fit. Why? It is an interesting question, and has, I think, an interesting and significant answer. And the answer lies in the pull of American life, in its strong democratic sense, in its responsible group consciousness, that like some powerful sun drew them away from the blighted moons of an alien and decadent beauty. It can not be too often noted that political institutions do not necessarily confer a real democracy, a democracy of the spirit. And what impresses an American reader of Verlaine, or Wilde, or Dowson, or d'Annunzio, is their isolation, their membership in an aloof and highly artificial class, their despite for or unconsciousness of any one who does not come into the art group to which they belong, for which they write, and from which they draw what is too often a somewhat febrile inspiration. In America such an undemocratic isolation, such a contempt for a large mass of public opinion, was impossible, or almost so. Here their conception of the artist as having "no more part in society than a monk in domestic life," a man "who can not be judged by its rules, nor praised nor blamed for his acceptance or rejection of its conventions," was almost completely foreign. So foreign that a stalwart American bard like Rich-

ard Hovey after long fasting and feasting with Pre-Raphaelites, Yellow-Books, and Symbolists, was moved to write his "Spring Feeling," where he scornfully consigns them all to the hadeses they delight in, turns his face westward to his own healthy land, there to

> ". . . let the Spring house-clean my brain,
> Where all this stuff is crammed;
> And let my heart grow sweet again;
> And let *the Age* be damned."

And so instead of considering the most abnormal poet the greatest, we have a wish to confer that distinction upon the most representative. It is the classical as opposed to the romantic ideal, and prides itself on evolving a characteristic type, rather than on pursuing an eccentric and exotic rarity. An American poet to be acclaimed must express America, or he must be true to the fundamentals of human nature as it is conceived in America. It is an ideal the Greeks would have approved, and it is interesting to observe its results.

II

Carman, Hovey, and Vagabondia

It has been suggested that our growing nationalism at the turn of the century might be also the cause of a new homogeneity of spirit. Whereas Lanier and Miller might have found themselves unable to

read each other's poetry, such disabilities with Moody and Hovey, Carman and Santayana, were much less likely. One reason for this was no doubt their college origins, and the cultural backgrounds from which they wrote. Of the seven or eight poets notable in this group, all but one were in some measure products of Harvard, and that one, Richard Hovey, was from Dartmouth. It has been the custom to speak disparagingly of the "albuminous Victorians," those library imitators of Tennyson and Longfellow who wrote between 1870 and 1890. They were, as Whitman said refiners and imitators must be, the soil of poetry, but not its bloom or seed. The question naturally arises, what of the next two decades, these college voices; did they too reflect only a lunar, worn out ray? Was theirs also poetry of the library, smelling of the lamp? Or was it perhaps fresh and odorous with flowers and fields?

Perhaps the most striking difference between this poetry and that of the cultivated Eastern poets that had gone before, was in its return to nature. Though the influence was later in New England, here too finally we see the library invaded by Whitman. Hovey and Carman delight to sing of vagabondage, and the joys of the open fields; Moody writes his "Gloucester Moors" out-of-doors where he can see the ocean from the rocks of the New England coast; and Santayana's mystical love lyrics enchant the spirit in an out-door cathedral, where nature itself performs its sacred rites for the adored one.

"For thee the sun doth daily rise and set
Behind the curtain of the hills of sleep,
And my soul, passing through the nether deep,
Broods on thy love, and never can forget.

For thee the garlands of the wood are wet,
For thee the daisies up the meadow's sweep
Stir in the sidelong light, and for thee weep
The drooping ferns above the violet."

And with this return to nature, we note also the presence of a mystical sense, a romantic symbolism of image, a worship of a spiritual reality behind the fact. In the sonnets of Santayana, and in the poetry of Moody, Carman, Rice, and Josephine Preston Peabody, were entwined these twin threads of nature and mystical seeking, of love of the world, and confidence that back of nature is a source for the spirit's beauty and peace. What distinguishes these Americans from the somewhat similar European Symbolists, is that they are more optimistic, healthier, have a sounder sense for reality and morality and nationalism, and tend much less to become mere poets of illuminated gas, of iridescent bubbles, and of dreams. Let us glance at their contributions to our poetry, and note the quality and characteristics of their best work.

It is customary to speak of the Canadian poet, Bliss Carman (1861-) and the Dartmouth poet, Richard Hovey (1864-1900), together. Their three jointly-produced Vagabondia Books, where they succeed in writing so much alike that none can, unas-

sisted, distinguish one from the other, and a general Bohemian, open-road friendliness and daring about their styles, contrive to unite them in our imaginations. If there is a difference, Carman is a shade more mystical, and Hovey a trifle more of a rowdy, but the difference is slight. Their three little books *Songs from Vagabondia* (1894), *More Songs from Vagabondia* (1896), and *Last Songs from Vagabondia* (1900), volumes often reprinted, are perhaps the best collections of college-man's poetry ever written. Here one finds The Stein Song, Barney McGee, The Sea Gypsy, A Vagabond Song, and that perfect celebration of a departed fellow rover, At the Road-House: In Memory of Robert Louis Stevenson; and here too is The Wander-Lovers, Comrades, A Staccato to O Le Lupe, and A Spring Feeling, to mention but a few of the more popular of these gay ballads of light-heartedness. One may describe them by saying that they are the spirit of Stevenson in poetry; or he may say that they are about as much of Walt Whitman as most college boys care for; or he may say that the Psi Upsilons to whom Hovey read many of them liked them even if they were poetry. It is the poetry of college youth, American college youth, off together on a vacation, roughing it some, seeking adventures in action or amours, enamoured of nature's mystery and beauty, holding conventions, except fraternity conventions, a good deal in abeyance if not in contempt, and united in friendship that is less amorous

but more various and enduring than love. It is roadside poetry, the poetry of inns, and of a masculine world, virile, healthy, a bit pagan, and as alive as the athletic wanderers and dreamers it celebrates. All that these poets have learned in a library is to appreciate their literary and other friends and to love beauty and take to the open road. Their quest is for adventure and the joys of the free; but not for anything very mystical, spiritual, or erudite. Their highest love is not religious, but natural and human, as in the poem, "When the Priest Left," from *Last Songs,* where talk of God is disparaged save as God is found in love and a kiss, or in the beauty of the morning.

In this part of their work, a holiday revolt from conventions, an open-road Bohemianism is the dominant note. These three books derive largely from Whitman, the acknowledged master of both poets. It is gay, boisterous, youthful poetry, sounding with the shouts and the derisive laughter of two revolters from Mid-Victorianism and the albuminous American imitations. It may be, as some critic has said, that it is the poetry of men who never grew up, who started revolting and never did anything else. Only at a certain stage of development, therefore, or in certain moods do we care for it. It is, frankly, holiday poetry; but like a holiday, it is sometimes exhilarating and restful and rejuvenating.

Yet something further needs to be said of both Hovey and Carman than can be said on the basis of

the Vagabondia Books, something to reveal the imaginative and cultural opulence in which these poets unite. Two other sorts of poems are to be credited to Hovey: the four ringing Arthurian dramas which he wrote, death cutting him off from writing the full nine of the intended cycle; and secondly, a group of Dartmouth, memorial, and national odes and songs, that abound in lyric vigor and manly feeling. Perhaps it is enough to say of the Arthurian dramas, that having read the four, one still regrets not being able to go on and read those that Hovey had time only to sketch. The legend is treated with Shakespearean vigor; the blank verse has vim and beauty; and the characters, especially of Lancelot, Guinevere, Arthur, Sir Dagonet, and the lyric brother Peredure, are, like the arguments of John Locke, "clear and distinct." No sickly Tennysonian sugar cloys the palate here. The problem of Lancelot's friendship with Arthur and his loyalty to Arthur's realm, fighting with his love for Arthur's Queen, is presented with passion and pity; and these emotions are beautifully conveyed to us. It is gorgeous poetic tapestry, woven of woes and painted with romance. Song, and wit, mingle with deeds of blood and daring; and one finds himself marking the pages and passages he would return to again. It is, to be sure, a world of moderns rather than of Arthurians, of noble passions at war with stifling conventions, a world not of Connecticut Yankees—but rather of our own modern more or less Bohemian college youth,

liberated and poetized, and swung backward into the dim backgrounds of Arthurian legend and superstition. Or to state it differently, it is the old tale retold to suit the taste of a modern culture, a culture on the surface Symbolistic, æsthetic, and a bit Bohemian.

Hovey's odes and college songs deserve about equal rank with the dramas. Two small volumes contain them: *Along the Trail* (1898) and the posthumously published *To the End of the Trail* (1908). Of Hovey's twenty pages of patriotic poetry produced by the Spanish-American War, "Bugles" has a sonorous aplomb that partly reconciles one to its jingoism and the ignoble line "Great is war—great and fair," and the unpoetic admonition to "pompous prattlers to cease, your idle platitudes of peace." To such ineptitude could patriotism persuade! "Unmanifest Destiny" is better, and rings true with quiet emotion; and the unified closing apostrophe to his country, launched on an unknown Spanish-American voyage, is memorable:

> "I do not know beneath what sky
> Nor on what seas shall be thy fate;
> I only know it shall be high,
> I only know it shall be great."

Of the other poems in *Along the Trail,* the college odes Comrades and Spring, and the Hanover Winter Song, are the most lively, and popular. Spring, indeed, is a beautiful ode much in Lanier's

manner, lyric, and haunting, as in the following beginning:

"I said in my heart, I am sick of four walls and a ceiling.
I have need of the sky.
I have business with the grass.
I will up and get me away where the hawk is wheeling,
Lone and high,
And the slow clouds go by.
I will get me away to the waters that glass
The clouds as they pass."

Yet there is a burst of fellowship in it too, quite beyond the languor and spiritual sweetness of Lanier, when we come out surprisingly on our gay old friend, hardly hackneyed at all by the passage of the years.

"When the wind comes up from Cuba,
And the birds are on the wing,
And our hearts are patting juba
To the banjo of the spring,
Then there's no wonder whether
The boys will get together,
With a stein on the table and a cheer for everything."

And the "Hanover Winter Song" sings itself, and would make even a Harvard man wish for Dartmouth while it is going:

"Ho, a song by the fire!
(Pass the pipes, fill the bowl!)
Ho, a song by the fire!
With a skoal! . . .

For the wolf wind is whining in the doorways,
And the snow drifts deep along the road,
And the ice-gnomes are marching from their Norways,
And the great white cold walks abroad.
(Booo—oo-o! pass the bowl!)

For here by the fire
We defy frost and storm.
Ha, ha! we are warm
And we have our heart's desire;
For here's four good fellows
And the beechwood and the bellows,
And the cup is at the lip
In the pledge of fellowship.
SKOAL!"

In *To the End of the Trail,* "The Laurel," an ode to Mary Day Lanier, and "Seaward," an ode on the death of the scholar and poet, Thomas William Parsons, amply repay reading for their high poetic style and free movement. The translations of Maeterlinck, Mallarme, and Verlaine show the range of Hovey's interests, and the sonnets on the Pre-Raphaelites and on Matthew Arnold show critical discrimination. Perhaps the most surprising thing here is the tour de force of producing a canto of *Don Juan* up to date. It is often as witty as Byron, and is, too, a sly Byronic criticism of the Byronic at the same time, as for instance in this defiant apology for plain dealing, where but for one give-away line, Byron himself might be speaking, as he pretends to be, straight out of hell, one hundred years later.

"I stand with Shakespeare, not to speak of Solomon;
My critics stand with Bowdler, Harlan, Comstock,
And though that kind may look supremely solemn on
Occasion, they're at the bottom but a rum stock.
A man may be a virtuous though a jolly man,
And wise without that mummery that benumbs talk,
That dull, pretentious, preternatural gravity
Those Tartuffes wear to cloak their own depravity."

Hovey's wit has not been enough remarked. He had the gift of gaiety and humor in verse even as a youth. "A Horrible Tale" and "Reflection," when one considers the youth of ten to sixteen who was penning those Austen-like satires, will make any one who comes across the slight volume containing them, a volume "printed by the author himself in 1880 at Washington, D. C., and at the age of sixteen," . . . laugh, and marvel.

To what has been said of Bliss Carman in discussing the Vagabondia Books, where much of his best work appears, little needs to be added. The author of over twenty volumes of lyrics, almost a book a year since 1893, he has necessarily written much that is of only slight interest From his early athletic Bohemianism, he seems more and more to incline to a vague, mystical pantheism, where the colors of the hills and trees, and the sounds of wind and stream speak to him of God. What one misses in his mystery is any very important ideas, profoundly felt and expressed. His poems are lyrical and at times flushed with a fine emotion. "Lord of

My Heart's Elation," for example, has a fresh rapture and a sense of the transiency of the life of man,

> "A fleet and shadowy column
> Of dust or mountain rain,
> To walk the earth a moment
> And be dissolved again."

But one or two ideas repeated over and over are scarcely enough to satisfy. A poet needs a firmer sense of life than Mr. Carman shows, or he needs, to compensate us for his lack of variety and representativeness, a deeper sense of mystery than is here evident. April airs, flowers, springtime, God; God, springtime, flowers, April airs—one volume of this is well enough, but twenty or twenty-five! One goes away gratefully to Matthew Arnold's cool lines and classic graces, where a mountain is a mountain and not apt to dissolve into a mist, and where the faculty of thought and the sense of human society remain firm and secure. Perhaps, after all, Hovey was fortunate in dying young, for revolt, Bohemianism, anti-intellectualism, are the deadly enemies of a poet who lives long enough to display with the prolixities of age what should remain a charming but evanescent expression of youth. Hovey, therefore, we incline to praise for his promise, but the lack of a large body of first-rate verse in the work of Bliss Carman, makes such praise impossible for him. He has lived long enough to show us his limitations.

Yet this is no note to end on, and in justice to his pleasing minor strain, rich and colorful, I quote one of his perfect little lyrics, where vagabondage and the mystical beauty of nature are still in harmonious union.

A Vagabond Song

There is something in the autumn that is native to my blood—
Touch of manner, hint of mood;
And my heart is like a rhyme,
With the yellow and the purple and the crimson keeping time.

The scarlet of the maples can shake me like a cry
Of bugles going by.
And my lonely spirit thrills
To see the frosty asters like a smoke upon the hills.

There is something in October sets the gypsy blood astir;
We must rise and follow her,
When from every hill of flame
She calls and calls each vagabond by name."

III

Neoplatonism in George Santayana

Somewhat apart from the nationalism and Bohemianism of these vagabondia poets, yet like them in mystical ecstasy and cultural sweetness was the poetry of George Santayana (1863-), the Harvard philosopher and essayist, whose niche in the poet's corner of these years is small but secure. His little volume of *Sonnets and Other Verses*

(1894) is slight and pleasing, with a Petrarchan grace and sweetness, and a mystical idealism that reveals to us the dreamy aloofness of the author. As Plato described the philosopher as desiring a place where he could contemplate life "from beneath the shelter of some wall," so these sonnets speak of a life so lived, a life sensitive, thoughtful, spiritual, and a little sad. There is a southern languor in the air of these gardens, a soft Spanish retreat where a modern Marius may live with nature, a cultivated nature, with the beloved, and with the soul's own mystical quest for the subtle joys of a Catholic heaven. And the glory of the book is that it builds for us such a retreat where for an hour or so we too can forget the tumult of the times and dream and muse in this poetic rose garden.

"A wall a wall around my garden rear,
And hedge me in from the disconsolate hills;
Give me but one of all the mountain rills,
Enough of ocean in its voice I hear.

Come no profane insatiate mortal near
With the contagion of his passionate ills;
The smoke of battle all the valley fills,
Let the eternal sunlight greet me here.

This spot is sacred to the deeper soul
And to the piety that mocks no more.
In nature's inmost heart is no uproar,
None in this shrine; in peace the heavens roll,
In peace the slow tides pulse from shore to shore,
And ancient quiet broods from pole to pole."

Such a volume might be produced at any period of culture, and depends not at all on contemporary movements of mind or event. It is interesting as being in direct contrast with the boisterous élan of Hovey, and as being far more subtle and profound than the mystical aspirations of Carman. A society able to produce so fine a flower of culture as is here revealed, has in some sense grown up. At least it has like Greece and Rome and England, afforded to these rare spirits the grace and leisure to withdraw into the soul, and a collegiate garden where noises do not come, and poetry and love and thought are all in all.

The union of human and heavenly love, of Platonic aspiration, is a favorite theme in this garden.

"We needs must be divided in the tomb,
For I would die among the hills of Spain,
And o'er the treeless, melancholy plain
Await the coming of the final gloom.

But thou—O pitiful!—wilt find scant room
Among thy kindred by the northern main,
And fade into the drifting mist again,
The hemlocks' shadow, or the pines' perfume.

Let gallants lie beside their ladies' dust
In one cold grave, with mortal love inurned;
Let the sea part our ashes, if it must,
The souls fled thence which love immortal burned,
For they were wedded without bond of lust,
And nothing of our heart to earth returned."

It is a book that the thoughtful or the subtle, once they peruse it, will be pretty sure to possess.

A younger member of this Harvard group, the Kentucky poet, Cale Young Rice (1872-), whose work beginning in 1898, was collected in two substantial volumes of *Plays and Poems* (1915), and is still continuing, is remarkable for his comprehensive interests, geographical and spiritual, and for his lyricism and sentiment. Lyrics, songs, dramatic lyrics, and poetic dramas, comprise his offerings, and of these, his dramas seem to me best. No lyrics of his strike so high a note or are so rounded in completeness as to be sure, like some of Carman's and Hovey's, of a permanent place in our literature. They are often sweet, often interesting in matter and mood, or tell a story that pleases, but they lack elevation and finality. For Mr. Rice's social criticism, his decrying of capitalist greed, and his worship of the human in success, one has respect; for his outlook over seas, his international sense of brotherhood, his introduction of Japanese, Chinese, and Indian themes and forms and colors, one has commendation. And, too, one likes his high ideals for poetry, and his long sustained efforts in the poetical workshop. His work is interesting and creditable, yet not truly memorable. It is respectable, good, not great, and as with the work of Stephen Phillips, or of the minor Victorians which it resembles, time will ruin it. Its matter is more interesting than its art.

IV

William Vaughn Moody, Nationalist and Mystic

A more Catholic mysticism than Santayana's, and a larger, more liberal Americanism than Hovey's, enriched the poetry of William Vaughn Moody (1869-1910), easily the best poet of his time. Born in Indiana, his parents dying before he was twenty, he educated himself at Harvard, did graduate work there, and there acquired his strong poetic bent, and learned to know classical and mediæval literatures. He then as a tutor spent the first of the several years he was to spend from time to time in Europe, and returned to do some eight years of teaching at Chicago University and to spend all his spare time and energy in writing poems, poetic dramas, and plays. *The Great Divide* (1905) made him generally famous, though his "Ode in Time of Hesitation" (1897) had already won him fame with readers who cared for poetry. He disliked teaching and quit it as soon as he could. He had epic ambitions in poetry, and but for his untimely death at forty-one, would, it seems probable, have gone far to achieve them.

Of his personal life one can learn much from the essay preceding his works, by John Matthews Manly; and from his *Letters,* and the introduction by his friend Daniel Gregory Mason, published soon

after his death. It was an instructive life, one typical of the group to which he belonged, the cultivated art group, with cosmopolitan leanings, yet so social and national in impulse as never to be able to sustain a more than exotic interest in Symbolism, Bohemianism, and their like. Moody's roots were mostly American, his mysticism alone being in any important sense of a more alien Catholicism. But to return to his life. He was a bachelor until a year before he died; he lived much in the society of a cultivated literary and university group, travelled intermittently here and abroad, cared little for money except as a means to his art, and seems to have been a likeable, serious, gay, and poetic fellow, of about equal parts epicurean, mystic, and boy. To judge from his letters, there was, however, a streak of the complaining æsthete about him, which withdrew disdainfully from all that was Chicago, and that could breathe only in a world of art and flowers. He was not, be it said, another example of the weary and wearying denationalized American to whom *abroad* alone is home. What he hated was what any soul alive and sensitive must hate, our commercial crassness, and our outer ugliness. Still, more robust natures do not spend their time complaining, even about Chicago, but set out rather to poetize it, and show the power of spirit over matter.

The themes of Moody's dozen best poems are chiefly three: *mystical, social,* and *national.* Poems dealing with the relation of man to God, mystical

poems, are Good Friday Night, The Death Of Eve, and The Death of Eve (a fragment); poems of social criticism are Gloucester Moors, I Am the Woman, and The Brute; and poems on the Spanish-American War, and appealing to national honor, are An Ode in Time of Hesitation, On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines, and The Quarry. Two or three love lyrics, two to his mother, The Daguerreotype, and Faded Pictures, and the opulent A Bracelet of Grass, and the humorous poem, The Menagerie, where the beasts in a zoo comment satirically on what they've evolved into, i.e., "a little man in trousers slightly jagged," need to be added, and the list of Moody's best work—if one omits the longer dramas—is about complete. Perhaps it will be clearest to discuss it in this order.

Moody's mysticism differs greatly from that of Lanier or Whitman or of other American poets with mystical tendencies. It is a mediæval and cultivated, rather than a pantheistic and natural mysticism. In Moody's poetic dramas, for instance, The Fire-Bringer, The Masque of Judgment, and The Death of Eve, it was his purpose to show how sin is due to the estrangement of man and God, and how both must fail unless there is reconciliation. "The Fire-Bringer" shows man seizing on the forbidden materialistic forces to his soul's ruin; "The Masque of Judgment" reveals the consequences of destruction even to God Himself if He carries out his decree for the destruction of man; and "The

Death of Eve" was to show how Eve accomplished a reconciliation. It will be seen, therefore, that Moody is a dualist. Behind his God lies fate or poetic justice, and even the Deity must obey the norm, the golden mean, or die.

Again, Moody's mysticism is more warm-blooded, more Catholic, giving the effect of colors caught from stained glass or painting, than was the case with the natural mystics. Nor does his mysticism seek like theirs in nature itself for the spiritual answer to the riddle, but seeks it in love, in the human procession, in the ritual of the Church. In Lanier's Hymns of the Marshes we hear nature speaking, herself a church, mysterious and sublime. But in Moody's "Good Friday Night" we are in Sorrento with Moody, watching the Eastertide procession, and suddenly catching with him a glimpse of the pity and love that is Christ. The Church, and not Nature, however, is the door to the holy of holies.

GOOD FRIDAY NIGHT

At last the bird that sang so long
In twilight circles, hushed his song:
Above the ancient square
The stars came here and there.

Good Friday night! Some hearts were bowed,
But some amid the waiting crowd
Because of too much youth,
Felt not the mystic ruth;

And of these hearts my heart was one:
Nor when beneath the arch of stone
With dirge and candle flame
The cross of passion came,

Did my glad spirit feel reproof,
Though on the awful tree aloof,
Unspiritual, dead,
Drooped the ensanguined Head.

To one who stood where myrtles made
A little space of deeper shade
(As I could half descry,
A stranger, even as I),

I said, "These youths who bear along
The symbols of their Saviour's wrong,
The spear, the garment torn,
The flaggel, and the thorn,—

Why do they make this mummery?
Would not a brave man gladly die
For a much smaller thing
Than to be Christ and king?"

He answered nothing, and I turned.
Throned in its hundred candles burned
The jeweled eidolon
Of her who bore the Son.

The crowd was prostrate; still, I felt
No shame until the stranger knelt;
Then not to kneel, almost
Seemed like a vulgar boast.

I knelt. The doll-face, waxen white,
Flowered out a living dimness; bright
Dawned the dear mortal grace
Of my own mother's face.

When we were risen up, the street
Was vacant; all the air hung sweet
With lemon-flowers; and soon
The sky would hold the moon.

More silently than new found friends
To whom much silence makes amends
For the much babble vain
While yet their lives were twain,

We walked along the odorous hill.
The light was little yet; his will
I could not see to trace
Upon his form or face.

So when aloft the gold moon broke,
I cried, heart-stung. As one who woke
He turned unto my cries
The anguish of his eyes.

"Friend! Master!" I cried falteringly,
"Thou seest the thing they make of thee.
Oh, by the light divine
My mother shares with thine,

I beg that I may lay my head
Upon thy shoulder and be fed
With thoughts of brotherhood!"
So through the odorous wood,

More silently than friends new-found
We walked. At the first meadow bound
His figure ashen-stoled
Sank in the moon's broad gold.

This seems to me one of Moody's most perfect, if not the most perfect of his poems. The hush and awe of the movement and metre, itself like a religious procession, and the worship and beauty of brotherhood, and the figure of Christ symbolically fading away in the broad gold of the moon at the end, is superb. It is the warm-blooded, lyric, passion-flower of Catholic mysticism blooming again in the poem of this western American, a flower far more rich and full than the philosophically-induced blooms of Santayana's rose of passion.

In "The Death of Eve," too, there is I know not what of symbolical fear and grandeur, with the most poetic and credible picture of the mother of mankind that I know. Kindred to Cain, she takes on herself his curse, and goes at the end of her life back to the Garden and the Tree, to meet God, not seemingly in contrition so much as in triumph of being Eve, to effect a reconciliation. God, himself, must take some blame in such a meeting, and so we see it played. It is regrettable that the drama was not finished, but what we have is epic, imaginative, and grand. The characters of Cain and Eve are sinister, full of anguish and daring; outcast, cursed, but not crushed. Moody's is a more poetically credible picture of Eden than Milton's, and his cosmol-

ogy lacks the harsh austerity of the greater bard. In Moody, there is passion glowing with a dark sublimity; in Milton, there is sublimity, but little of human passion to make the sublime understandable and tolerable. It is in a sense the difference between Phidias and Praxiteles.

What daring, for instance, to make Eve both disobedient and yet winsome to the Lord, and yet how credible this picture of her under the Tree, singing her last song to the God of Hosts, who though He be God, yet like Adam cannot endure without her—

> "Thine ample, tameless creature—
> Against thy will and word, behold, Lord, this is She!"

And how impressive and powerful the final picture of Cain, who has accompanied Eve on her last journey back to Eden, waiting outside the gate while Eve under the Tree is singing her swan-song of death and triumph to God; and at last, when Eve is dead and forgiven, creeping like some hunted animal in to the Tree where lies the shape that had been Eve, his mother.

> "From carven plinth and thousand galleried green
> Cedars, and all close boughs that over-tower,
> The shadows lengthened eastward from the gates,
> And still Cain hid his forehead in his knees,
> Nor dared to look abroad lest he might find
> More watchers in the portals: for he heard
> What seemed the rush of wings; from while to while
> A pallor grew and faded in his brain,

As if a great light passed him near at hand.
But when above the darkening desert swales
The moon came, shedding white, unlikely day,
Cain rose, and with his back against the stone,
As a keen fighter at the desperate odds,
Glared round him. Cool and silent lay the night,
Empty of any foe. Then, as a man
Who has a thing to do, and makes his fear
An icy wind to freeze his purpose firm,
He stole in through the pillars of the gate,
Down aisles of shadow windowed with the moon,
By meads with the still stars communicant,
Past heaven-bosoming pool and pooled stream,
Until he saw, through tangled fern and vine,
The Tree, where God had made its habitation:
And crouched above the shape that had been Eve,
With savage, listening frame and sidelong eyes,
Cain waited for the coming of the dawn."

Moody's social criticism, his passion for human and industrial justice, we find best revealed in his most popular poem, "Gloucester Moors," and in the poems "I am the Woman" and "The Brute." "Gloucester Moors" is a staggering picture of the earth as a ship ruthlessly captained by a brutal and ignorant few, perhaps without goal, and certainly without any general aims for the benefit of all those broken souls of men who

"Fester down in the slaver's pen
With nothing to say or do."

It is a clear-eyed criticism of the harsh capitalism and cheap-labor days of McKinley and 16 to 1, and

is the expression of the feelings that Bryan was to rouse and Roosevelt to use in the service of social and industrial reform. The indignation and sorrow animating it stir the blood even yet in these similarly greedy and confused times, when he who will may watch when her captains pass, and muse with Moody,

> "She were better captainless.
> Men in the cabin, before the mast,
> And some were reckless and some aghast,
> And some sat gorged at mess."

"The Brute" is materialism, machinery, industry, which man captured only to be himself enslaved by the beast he had imprisoned. Yet here there is a hope that the Brute too must bring the good time on, and lift from man the curse of Adam. Prometheus is thus not wholly rejected. "I Am the Woman" is a kind of Whitman-like study of the place of woman in society, essential, sensuous, spiritual, the mother and comforter of men, and even in the half-world, the container of the spirit of the race and of God. It is powerful, and masters a difficult metre; it drives home. It is a poem that will trouble the conventional. Woman is here too elemental, the difference between wife, mother, and courtesan being all too easily swept aside to suit a traditional taste. Yet the poem is not unspiritual. It is Moody's nearest approach to Whitman,—or Edgar Lee Masters.

Indignation with American imperialism in the Spanish-American War seems to-day a little beside the point. As a result much of the wind has been taken from the sails of the proud great verse which Moody wrote under the impulse of that indignation. Nevertheless, "An Ode in Time of Hesitation" is in the great democratic American tradition, much more so than the jingoistic shoutings of Hovey's "Bugles," and for its true patriotism and splendid geographical pictures, its sense of lofty nationalism, deserves to rank as one of the four or five great odes we have produced. It has opulence, color, and life, though it lacks, I cannot but think, a certain strength and that final something which is necessary to immortality. The assured touch, the winged fancy of Keats's odes, or of Milton's "Lycidas" is not here. It is, one may admit, much of it, great poetry, and fit to be placed alongside Lowell's "Commemoration Ode," Hovey's "Spring," and perhaps Lanier's "Corn," and "Sunrise." What it lacks, however, is strength. It is in places weak emotionally and, I grieve to say it, a trifle effeminate.

> "Oh by the sweet blood and young
> Shed on the awful hill slope at San Juan,"

is not, I think, successful, nor do I much care for the proud conferring of state with impassioned state over "sick Cuba's cry,"

> "Then Alabama heard,
> And rising, pale, to Maine and Idaho
> Shouted a burning word!"

This, to differ again with Mr. Howard M. Jones, is not an example of the "virility and spiritual resiliency" of the poet he delights to praise. Indeed, one suspects him of "giving" these qualities to Moody out of his own friendly generosity, because of his perhaps subconscious critical instinct that it was just these qualities which the poet lacked and which he most needed.

The simpler lyric, "On a Soldier Fallen in the Philippines," is more easily successful. It has a hush and impressiveness that drives home. "The Quarry," too, is a fine painting, and once one sees what it is about, that it is a praise of John Hay's refusal to permit the prowlers of Europe to dismember sick and elephantine China, the quarry, one appreciates it much as he would a sight of the American flag, coming to rescue him were he beleaguered abroad. It is a good puzzle poem, teasing one on with its trickery.

Turning now to Moody's other poems. "The Daguerreotype," too, seems to me a little overstrained emotionally, even a bit mawkish, and I never read it with much pleasure. "The Bracelet of Grass" despite a weak ending is better, and "Faded Pictures" is superb and as warm and friendly in pathos as the verse of Browning which it resembles. The suggested tribute to the poet's mother is here far finer, I think, than in the overestimated "Daguerreotype."

Faded Pictures

Only two patient eyes to stare
Out of the canvas. All the rest—
The warm green gown, the small hands pressed
Light in the lap, the braided hair

That must have made the sweet low brow
So earnest, centuries ago,
When some one saw it change and glow—
All faded! Just the eyes burn now.

I dare say people pass and pass
Before the blistered little frame,
And dingy work without a name
Stuck in behind its square of glass.

But I, well, I left Raphael
Just to come drink these eyes of hers,
To think away the stains and blurs
And make all new again and well.

Only, for tears my head will bow,
Because there on my heart's last wall,
Scarce one tint left to tell it all,
A picture keeps its eyes, somehow.

With Moody's death in 1910 the transitional period rounding the century came to its close. Stimulated by Whitman's large nationalism and by the colorful love of beauty and the artistic life in the European schools, these poets created in American poetry the beginnings of a new art. It is an art in which the æsthetic is stressed. Whitman's shaggy

naturalism, for instance, we see trimmed, and quieted down to the merely vacational "barbaric yawp" of the Vagabondia Books. There is left wonder and joyous adventure, but not the cosmic rapture of *Leaves of Grass*, not its disturbing sensuousness. Moody alone in "I Am the Woman" achieves the passionate centrality of Whitman's view. And mysticism too tends to turn from nature to art. Santayana and Moody avoid pantheism for the Platonic or Catholic revelation with their colorful subtleties of rite and contemplation. Nature in them is a background, an artistic decoration, but no longer a spirit, a religion. In Moody and in Rice, too, we see the beginning of the inflood of moods and scenes and manners from Chinese, Indian, and Japanese poetry and life that has become to-day an interesting corner of our poetry of art. Yet art was not all. Social wrongs and international betrayals stir us in Moody; and in Hovey's "Bugles" we catch a note that sounds for a moment like an American echo of Mr. Kipling's marching songs. Patriotism and humanitarianism reveal the events and the spirit of the times.

So that if one were driven to say in a few words how the poetry from 1890 to 1910 differed from that of the preceding twenty years, he might say that by means of these few poets from two of our colleges, it substituted nationalism for provincialism; achieved by an emphasis on the artistic, a cultural homogeneity of outlook; woke up to its international

opportunities in art, and its international obligations in politics; became socially decidedly more humanitarian; and substituted a refined, a more traditional mysticism and naturalism for the pantheism of Lanier and Miller, and Whitman. It more than doubled the volume of poetry fit to live as compared with the earlier period, and if one compares its results with those to be had in England or France over a similar time, he will not, I think, need to apologize. At least our poets strove during these years to express us, to represent, and even to lead us, and were not sick with art, or morbid with sensuousness, nor eating the lotus in the isles of Symbolism. They stayed national, human, and healthy, and in art, especially in American art, that always is to be desired.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONTEMPORARY RENAISSANCE

1910-1923

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I

The New Poetry

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine.

THOUGH national unity may be as desirable as a Rooseveltian period maintained, it is noticeable that it has in these later years been rudely broken. The serpent of Symbolism and the Chinese dragon of Imagism to-day disturb the cultivated gardens of poetry, driving the decorous to the shelter of whatever conventions still remain to them. That which in Moody and Hovey was but a tentative experiment, has become in Miss Lowell and Ezra Pound a dominating motive. Like Titania who in the fairy tale fell in love with an ass, our modern art, or rather what is known as the new art, has fallen in love with the grotesque. In the African animism of the latest sculpture, in the cacophonous syncopation of our dance music, in the disassociated moodiness of the French composers, or in such an amorphic succession of sensations as

James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*,—there runs this new spirit of the decadence of the bizarre, and, as we have noted, in poetry too, such a school is conspicuous. Rising from the impact of Walt Whitman's naturalism on European Symbolism and Imagism, a movement that in fifty years has had its vogue in France, Germany, Italy, and Russia, it has in the last decade returned to England and America and founded a school. That the school has much but a freakish importance, the general reader will scarcely admit. Like the "Picture of a Nude Descending a Staircase," with which a futuristic painter so agitated the popular consciousness a few years ago, the problem being to find the nude or the staircase, the new imagism, free verse, polyphonic prose, and symbolism has about it a taint of oddity and madness that is as yet quite far from being a typically American art. Its votaries, however, look on it as a child of the future, and in their more enthusiastic moments think to see it obliterate much that we now hold dear. At any rate, the new poetry summarizes a group and a point of view. Perhaps, like "The Lyrical Ballads," it will prove a Cinderella among the muses. At least it is well to examine its pretensions.

Of the critical tenets of the school it may be said that they are not so surprising as the results they have generated. It does not, for instance, much alarm one to hear that the new poetry has a passion for *the exact word*, for freedom in *choice of subject*,

and that it desires its *images* to be *hard, clear,* and *concentrated.* After Whitman, or the Psalms, the reader may even indulge the free verse desire for symphonic *looseness of rhythm,* and believe that every idea has a vibration of its own if the poet can but catch it. But having accepted these now rather conventional theories, one is scarcely prepared for the disintegrating riot with which the oriental colors and edges of their poems strike the senses.

That is, one is unprepared unless he has met the European disciples, and is acquainted with the freakishness that overtook continental poetry at the end of the last century. The seething imagism that Whitman aroused in the mind of such a German poet as Arno Holz (1863-), for example, has scarcely been surpassed in the later American and English imagists. It is, indeed, a painted chaos, a psychology disrupted and wild, that his verses reveal, and that runs like a lesser madness through so much of our own effete romanticism. As a glimpse of Holz, the following fantasy will perhaps suffice. It is, after all, no worse than T. S. Eliot!

PHANTASUS: VI, 3

"At night about my sacred grove seventy bronze cows hold vigil;
a thousand gay stone lamps glimmer

On a red lacquer throne
I sit in the Holy of Holies.

Above me
through the entablature of sandalwood
pricked out in a square
stand the stars.

I
blink!
If I should rise now,
my ivory shoulders would shatter the roof;
the heaven
I made to be,
beneath which I dammed the circling sea whose blue
bloomed myriad years before me,
would tumble
and the great dazzling egg-shaped diamond upon my
smooth, green, brazen, shallow-vaulted, bold, broad, pensive
brow
would thrust through the moon!

Shall I . . . . once more . . . . found myself upon my ruin?
Shall I . . . . reconstruct . . . . the World—Naught? . . . .
Shall I . . . annul . . . . the Whole that I wrought?

I . . . . . No!

The fat priests may snore peacefully.
I
I shall not arise!
I shall sit
with my legs crossed under me,
thinking of this, thinking of that,
feel how the clouds travel through my brain and mirror myself
in my navel.

This is a bleeding ruby
in a naked belly of gold."

In America and England, however, Anglo-Saxon reserve has hesitated before such a phantasus mallare, and quite understandable purposes have for the most part remained in control. The new poetry with us, for instance, has been overwhelmingly an *art-for-art's sake* ambition; *social revolution* and *emotional naturalism* playing in it but minor rôles. And though in this art-imagism, free verse, translation, and polyphonic prose, there is a passion for disintegrated exactness of image divorced from a point of view, this disruption, though often bizarre, is seldom, as in the above Phantasus, insane.

As to the quality and quantity of our new poetry some things have already been written. Biographical and critical data, with some account of origins, appear in Miss Lowell's and Louis Untermeyer's books on modern poetry. What now is chiefly needed is a critical survey of the field, and an estimate of its production and importance.

Of the eighteen writers who have some distinction here, perhaps twelve belong chiefly to *the art group*. Here technique, interest in color, edge, materials, is a primary interest, and concern with ideas, emotions, social significance, either secondary or nothing. Translations from the Chinese, or Indian, or Japanese, or from the French or German imagists, too have great vogue. In the field of Chinese translation or adaptation, for instance, one finds Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, Eunice Tietjens, Allen Upward, Helen Wadell, and Arthur Waley,

an impressive list; and in Greek H. D. and Richard Aldington; in Japanese J. G. Fletcher; for India Tagore; and in German and Russian poetry, the Deutsch-Yarmolinsky anthologies. Thus the international interests of these poets suggest the cosmopolitan decentralization of their points of view. It is the Bohemianism of the studio, the catholicity of art that is their bond of union.

Of the American art-imagists, Miss Amy Lowell is the leader, with H. D., and John G. Fletcher and the sometime Americans Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington, following. Add to this list Eunice Tietjens with her *Profiles from China,* a series of free verse adaptations of exquisite grace, and the important members of the group are at hand. Of the thirty or so volumes produced by these writers, how much is apt to achieve an enduring significance? Or must it mostly suffer an early death, slain by the term experimental? Of Miss Lowell's eight volumes, interesting and vigorous as they are, I should venture high claims for only her third, *Men, Women, and Ghosts.* The others, though they are poetical reliques of a fine sort, already begin to merit their museum. They take a fine glaze, they are beautifully colored antiques, but for the most part I cannot think *Sword Blades and Poppy Seeds, Can Grande's Castle,* and the rest, more than a promise congealed. *Men, Women, and Ghosts,* however, is a book no lover of American poetry will wish to ignore. Beginning with the tragic minuette-maca-

bre, "Patterns," the book strikes its opening chord of elegant futility with an eighteenth century grace. Figurines in Old Saxe is fine china; Bronze Tablets is a side-window glimpse of the French Revolution; War Pictures is our World War; and The Overgrown Pasture is realistic New England gone to seed. Here is romance, irony, passion, and a ruddy beauty; and breaking the bonds of the art-shop, here too is a liberal love of life that defies morals and defies ennui, and is yet without sentimentality and without fear. In this book Miss Lowell is truly original; she has a masculine vigor and sweep, and is, I venture, by this volume alone, the equal if not the superior of any woman poet the modern world has produced.

As an example of Miss Lowell's merit, a single poem must suffice. The poignant repressions of "Patterns" is sharp and beautiful.

PATTERNS

I walk down the garden paths,
And all the daffodils
Are blowing, and the bright blue squills.
I walk down the patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
With my powdered hair and jewelled fan.
I too am a rare
Pattern. As I wander down
The garden paths.

My dress is richly figured,
And the train

Makes a pink and sliver stain
On the gravel, and the thrift
Of the borders.
Just a plate of current fashion,
Tripping by in high-heeled, ribboned shoes.
Not a softness anywhere about me,
Only whalebone and brocade.
And I sink on a seat in the shade
Of a lime tree. For my passion
Wars against the stiff brocade.
The daffodils and squills
Flutter in the breeze
As they please.
And I weep;
For the lime tree is in blossom
And one small flower has dropped upon my bosom.

And the plashing of waterdrops
In the marble fountain
Comes down the garden-paths.
The dripping never stops.
Underneath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin,
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding,
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water
Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.
What is Summer in a fine brocaded gown!
I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground.
All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.

I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths,
And he would stumble after,
Bewildered by my laughter.

I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt and the
buckles on his shoes.
I would choose
To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths.
A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover.
Till he caught me in the shade,
And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as he
clasped me,
Aching, melting, unafraid.
With the shadows of the leaves and the sundrops,
And the plopping of the waterdrops,
All about us in the open afternoon—
I am very like to swoon
With the weight of this brocade,
For the sun sifts through the shade.

Underneath the fallen blossom
In my bosom,
Is a letter I have hid.
It was brought to me this morning by a rider from the
Duke.
"Madam, we regret to inform you that Lord Hartwell
Died in action Thursday se'nnight."
As I read it in the white, morning sunlight,
The letters squirmed like snakes.
"Any answer, Madam," said my footman.
"No," I told him.
"See that the messenger takes some refreshment.
No, no answer."

And I walked into the garden,
Up and down the patterned paths,
In my stiff, correct brocade.
The blue and yellow flowers stood up proudly in the sun,
Each one.
I stood upright too,

Held rigid to the pattern
By the stiffness of my gown.
Up and down I walked,
Up and down.

In a month he would have been my husband.
In a month here, underneath this lime,
We would have broke the pattern;
He for me, and I for him,
He as Colonel, I as Lady,
On this shady seat.
He had a whim
That sunlight carried blessing.
And I answered, "It shall be as you have said."
Now he is dead.

In Summer and in Winter I shall walk
Up and down
The patterned garden-paths
In my stiff, brocaded gown.
The squills and daffodils
Will give place to pillared roses, and to asters, and to snow.
I shall go
Up and down
In my gown.
Gorgeously arrayed,
Boned and stayed.
And the softness of my body will be guarded from embrace
By each button, hook, and lace.
For the man who should loose me is dead,
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
In a pattern called a war.
Christ! What are patterns for?"

Such treatment of Miss Lowell, is perhaps even with so much praise, a bit cavalier, and I do not wish to deny the novelty and even the interest of much of her work, indeed of such an entire volume as the polyphonic prose *Can Grande's Castle.* Only her best work is so much better, so much more apt to endure, that it is well not to mar it with talk of her "experiments."

It is when one turns to reading the others of the free and imagistic poets, that confusion and irritation usually begins. One is color-blinded, or sensation-crammed; but not burdened with meanings certainly. Read for instance in the beautiful little volumes of the remarkable poet whom many enthusiasts consider the purest of the imagists, and ask yourself when you have finished, how much you can remember. Yet there is a Greek edge to the imagism of H. D. (Helena Doolittle, now Mrs. Richard Aldington, 1886-), a kind of clear sunlit view of blue bays and marble temples that is very charming. Her poems are like epitaphs, but done with a steady coolness and an eye to beauty that is classically pure. Interiors, pathos, the subjective, she does not touch, but with a fresh wide-eyed view, revels in landscapes.

OREAD

"Whirl up, sea—
Whirl your pointed pines.
Splash your great pines

On our rocks.
Hurl your green over us—
Cover us with your pools of fir."

Personality too she eliminates, and opinion, and thought. Pure beauty of image and a naïve wonder suffice. It is a child alive with interest before a new object that we see here:

THE POOL

"Are you alive?
I touch you—
You quiver like a sea-fish
I cover you with my net.
What are you, banded one?"

Such pure colors and so clear an edge—will they preserve her? With artists perhaps, with readers, no. Only those who wish their world unjointed, meaningless, "infinitely repellant particles," or those who with other aims, would go to school to her technique, will be tempted to linger long with these slight volumes. Yet to such persons they will have a magic, for in her chaste art at distilling for us beauty's essence, H. D. is like a chipped fragment of a Greek vase or temple, lovely though a relic, a subtle symbol of a beauty that does not die.

Of John Gould Fletcher (1886-) and his ten volumes of free verse and imagism, his color symphonies, his goblins and pagodas, his irradiations, and his old South and far West pictures, only the

devout imagist will speak buoyantly. In much of his work he has an unrivaled gift of dullness. The reader tires of a poet whose eyes seem to have little traffic with his intelligence. Ten volumes of child-like art images, art edges, art colors, art atmospheres, all lying about in unrelated heaps, are bound to give pause to all but the student. Or if the author gives us a point of view or a thought, it is some such direct address to the inanimate as this,

"Gods of this land who shaped these cliffs, whose fireless altars no one heeds,
Make peace between me and these rocks, let me not face their force in vain."

Most of us do not speak much with rocks, or quarrel with them after this fashion, and so a poet who does, speaks in a foreign tongue. It is Mr. Fletcher's misfortune that he offers us so few inducements to learn his language. Visual geographia thinly misted with a haze of history composes most of his late work, *Breakers and Granite* (1921), and this but continues the manner and mood of many of his other verses.

Yet though this is the impression that reading all of him leaves, at least on me, I am in doubt. I pick up his Arizona Poems and read, for instance,

MEXICAN QUARTER

"By an alley lined with tumble-down shacks,
And street-lamps askew, half-sputtering,
Feebly glimmering on gutters choked with filth, and dogs
Scratching their mangy backs:

Half-naked children are running about,
Women puff cigarettes in back doorways,
Crickets are crying;
Men slouch sullenly
Into the shadows.
Behind a hedge of cactus,
The smell of a dead horse
Mingles with the smell of tamales frying.

And a girl in a black lace shawl
Sits in a rickety chair by the square of unglazed window,
And sees the explosion of the stars
Fiercely poised on the velvet sky.
And she seems humming to herself:
"Stars, if I could reach you
(You are so very clear that it seems as if I could reach you),
I would give you all to the Madonna's image
On the gray plastered altar behind the paper flowers,
So that Juan would come back to me,
And we could live again those lazy burning hours,
Forgetting the tap of my fan and my sharp words.
And I would only keep four of you—
Those two blue-white ones overhead
To put in my ears,
And those two orange ones yonder
To fasten on my shoe-buckles."

A little further along the street
A man squats stringing a brown guitar
The smoke of his cigarette curls round his hair,
And he too is humming, but other words:
"Think not that at your window I wait.
New love is better, the old is turned to hate.
Fate! Fate! All things pass away;
Life is forever, youth is but for a day.
Love again if you may,

Before the golden moons are blown out of the sky
And the crickets die.
Babylon and Samarkand
Are mud walls in a waste of sand."

And that, one must admit is delightful, a timeless picture of time in a southwest setting. "Rain in the Desert," too, is a fine, a vivid painting! And then one comes to "The Blue Symphony," which, I take it, is the portrait of a soul in color, or something like that. Finding its theme is like finding the meaning of sunlight or of the grass, or of the sky, or of asking oneself the question, what is the taste of white. Yet poetry has no right to remain so elusive. Or has it? Certainly "The Blue Symphony" is a very beautiful and very irritating piece of art.

Of the former Americans, Ezra Pound and Richard Aldington, a translation and a rather simple poem to a tree will give a glimpse at their best. "The Poplar," by Richard Aldington, has a grace and lingers in the memory, albeit in its direct address to the inanimate, it may be thought a bit silly.

THE POPLAR

"Why do you always stand there shivering
Between the white stream and the road?

The people pass through the dust
On bicycles, in carts, in motor-cars;
The wagoners go by at dawn;
The lovers walk on the grass path at night.

Stir from your roots—walk, poplar!
You are more beautiful than they are.

I know that the white wind loves you,
Is always kissing you and turning up
The white lining of your green petticoat.
The sky darts through you like blue rain,
And the grey rain drips on your flanks
And loves you.
And I have seen the moon
Slip his silver penny into your pocket
As you straightened your hair;
And the white mist curling and hesitating
Like a bashful lover about your knees.

I know you, poplar;
I have watched you since I was ten.
But if you had a little real love,
A little strength,
You would leave your nonchalant idle lovers
And go walking down the white road
Behind the wagoners.

There are beautiful beeches
Down beyond the hill.
Will you always stand there shivering?"

The fine few strokes of the following translation of Ezra Pound give an unforgettable impression of Li Po's artless winsomeness. It is in the heart of no western poet to be so delicately pathetic.

THE RIVER-MERCHANT'S WIFE:

A LETTER FROM THE CHINESE OF LI PO

"While my hair was still cut straight across my forehead
I played about the front gate, pulling flowers.

You came by on bamboo stilts, playing horse;
You walked about my seat, playing with blue plums.
And we went on living in the village of Chokan:
Two small people, without dislike or suspicion.

At fourteen I married My Lord you.
I never laughed, being bashful.
Lowering my head, I looked at the wall.
Called to, a thousand times, I never looked back.

At fifteen I stopped scowling;
I desired my dust to be mingled with yours
Forever and forever, and forever.
Why should I climb the look-out?

At sixteen you departed,
You went into far Ku-to-Yen, by the river of swirling eddies,
And you have been gone five months.
The monkeys make sorrowful noise overhead.
You dragged your feet when you went out.
By the gate now, the moss is grown, the different mosses,
Too deep to clear them away!
The leaves fall early this autumn, in wind.
The paired butterflies are already yellow with August
Over the grass in the west garden—
They hurt me.
I grow older.
If you are coming down through the narrows of the river Kiang,
Please let me know beforehand,
And I will come out to meet you,
As far as Cho-fu-Sa."

More could be said of Pound and his many experiments in all the new schools, of his impressive

translations, and of so well-known a ballad as his "Ballad for Gloom."

> "For God, our God is a gallant foe
> That playeth behind the veil,"

but most of his work refuses, like so much imagism, and free verse, to mean anything very special, or to present any coherent view of life. It is perhaps the merit of these poems that they imitate nature in disintegration. It is the reader's privilege to forget most of them.

One other volume in the group, however, strikes unforgettably on the mind, Miss Eunice Tietjens' *Profiles From China* (1917). It is a series of Chinese vignettes, beautifully colored, interesting, romantic, sordid, exquisitely turned. Space forbids quotation of the longer pictures, but of the Echoes, one or two will suffice. First a humorous glimpse of a very old matter.

> POETICS
>
> "While two ladies of the Imperial harem
> held before him a screen of pink silk,
> and a P'in Concubine knelt with his
> ink-slab, Li Po, who was very drunk,
> wrote an impassioned poem to the moon."

And then on the next page an unforgettable ecstasy, that very well may have been that poem:

> A LAMENT OF SCARLET CLOUD
>
> "O golden night, lit by the flame of seven stars,
> the years have drunk you too."

Profiles From China is a brief but highly successful visit to the Orient. It is safe to predict that it will continue to charm.

Writers who use free verse as a vehicle in the *social revolution* find Arturo Giovannetti their chief exponent. His poem, "The Walker," a picture of the cell-treading criminal has pity, and an outlaw's indignation against the society that imprisons and cages its members. Such a poem is impressive in a dark sullen way, as the voice of a man and a class whose feelings are their law. Carl Sandburg should, of course, be mentioned here, though, as will appear later, his revolutionary poetry is but a piece of his vaster edifice. Schauffler too deserves a word; and Louis Ledoux, and Max Eastman. They aid the movement in their speeches, and write now and then a poem for "the masses."

The emotional naturalists, disciples of Whitman and Freud, are more prolific. James Oppenheim, Louis Untermeyer, and most impressively the Englishman D. H. Lawrence, interpret life as a thing of subconscious, animal, and vitalistic behavior. Oppenheim's verses have gusto and range, and often as in the volume *War and Laughter* (1916), have the gift of interest. He is an echo of Whitman, however, and like an echo, he lacks the resiliency and range of the original. *The New Adam* (1920), by Louis Untermeyer, achieves, as in the poem "Summer Storm," a certain passionate heat, but the

intensity is more photographic than artistically reserved. In general he is not a poet, but an industrious versifier. Some of the best work in this field of interpretation the Englishman D. H. Lawrence has written. His poem "Tortoises" (1921), a description of the "crucifixion into sex" of these symbolically unwieldy reptiles has a grim pathos and truth that defies and triumphs over its own meanness. It is, however, remarkable that those who, like these authors, see the union of man and nature chiefly in the facts of sex tend to a morbid intensiveness of interest whose conclusion is in satiety or in insanity. Theirs is a fire whose wood is too soon ashes.

The New Poetry, it will be seen, has some successes to its credit, and this study has lingered chiefly with those successes. Some of its poems, some of its volumes of poetry, will remain in the memory. As an experiment it may bring in new successes, new forms, and so justify its aberrations. At present, however, its failures seem strong upon it, and what they are, it may be well here briefly to summarize. These are the points that may with much justice be made against the school. Perhaps they are not final, but in too many cases their truth is now only too evident. (1) This new poetry lacks metre and the aids of rhyme, and so is usually hard to remember; (2) it tries to present images rather than ideas, and so is guilty of a mélange de genres, that is of trying to do with words what only paint-

ing or sculpture can do adequately; (3) it is art-shop poetry, of artists for artists, and so highly technical that there is more interest in means than ends. The result is that its appeal is only to the initiates; (4) its emphasis on color and edge has eliminated atmosphere, and the result is too often the metallic lustre of highly glazed pottery, rather than the soft rose-blooms of light and shade in nature; (5) its themes are often silly, its world disassociated and wild, its direct address to inanimate objects unnatural and futile, and (6) a Mid-Victorian objection, it has nothing to do with the world of conduct or morals, and so, if we believe Matthew Arnold, averts its ken from a good three-fourths of human life.

With such serious disabilities, it is not surprising that no great following has attended even our milder American imagists. And so to-day there is a general feeling that these gorgons, hydras, and chimeras were perhaps what the conservatives proclaimed them, but the lunatic fringe of a post-war menagerie. An amusing proof of this delighted conservatives when Witter Bynner and Arthur Davison Ficke in a poetical hoax entitled *Spectra* (1916) succeeded in founding another "new" movement, the Spectric group. Critics who were deceived into giving the volume a favorable "press," still nurse the wounds caused by the authors' explosion of their own nine days' hoax. Yet the critics had only themselves to blame. Anyone might know this was nonsense!

EMANUEL MORGAN

Opus 2

Hope
Is the antelope
Over the hills;
Fear
Is the wounded deer
Bleeding in rills;
Care
Is the heavy bear
Tearing at meat;
Fun
Is the mastodon
Vanished complete — — —
And I am the stag with the golden horn
Waiting till my day is born.

Though in the arts, things just as grotesque are still taken seriously, here too there is a point of saturation. Perhaps the other absurdities of imagism and free verse will dissolve like that one in a gust of Rabelaisian laughter; perhaps, though this seems less likely, Puritanism will purge them; or even more likely, perhaps, (deadliest of fates!) they will be yawned into oblivion. Certainly most readers today incline to vote free verse dull and imagism silly. Only the exceptional volumes, such as Masters' *Spoon River,* Miss Lowell's *Men, Women, and Ghosts,* Sandburg's *Chicago Poems,* and Miss Tietjens' *Profiles From China,* now seem apt to survive the general inertia. Imagism, free verse, polyphonic prose, symbolism, despite the drums and trumpets,

appear to have had their day. Certainly they have not yet achieved the obliterating destinies for which their votaries prayed.

II

The Lyricists

O world, I cannot hold thee close enough

If free verse is wedded to the bizarre, and a dominant note in the last decade, that has not been the age's only note. Here, as in the period of Reconstruction East, lyric singers are to be found in abundance, singers with little care for the time spirit, theories of art and life, and popular movements. Rather they sing the old songs over, of life and death, of flower and bird, of time and eternity. Conservative in their care for verse forms, they cling too to the universal unchanging pageantry of human nature, with its ecstasies and terrors, and the beauty and pity of life on the earth. Theirs is the poetry that is historically, at least, timeless, poetry that any period might produce, and by the same token, poetry that like the songs of the birds or the flowers that bloom in the spring, any period that is sensitive to beauty may enjoy.

The bane of the *new* poetry was to be termed experimental. The lyricist, save when he is at his best, suffers from the opposite difficulty: he is too imitative. Here, for example, is a group of some

twenty writers of songs and lyrics. · Even a very little acquaintance with the figures of poetic mortality will teach us that most of these "prominent" poets will not remain prominent long. New flowers of new springs will replace them, and their freshness will soon fade. It is the duty then of the critic, it is his pleasure, to seek the more timeless blooms, perennials, and note if he can, a few bits of ageless beauty in all this fading pleasure. In short, since themes, historical and social relations, genealogy, here count for so little, the best the critic can do is to anthologize. What then are some of the more lasting lyrics produced by this group of some twenty modern poets? Miss Monroe and Miss Rittenhouse in their collections have made much of their best work accessible. Who then are these minor lyricists, and how much of them is worth saving?

Of the eight volumes of Conrad Aiken, for instance, his second work *Turns and Movies,* 1916, seems to me his best rounded and with its fifteen sharp little vignettes of vaudeville life, and the Discordants: "Music I Heard," and "Dead Cleopatra," it contains beauty that will not soon cease to please. The longer poems, in such volumes as *The Jig of Forslin,* 1916, or *Punch, the Immortal Liar,* 1921, mean too little, and are lacking in finality and form. Too often we are present merely at a flow of highly colored images. The universe reduces itself to a fantastic panorama of sights and sounds, a mere weariness of sensation. Here and there, as in the

Morning and Evening Songs of Senlin, such a method succeeds in gaining amid its evanescence a crystal moment of perfection; but such moments are in the longer mist-narratives, all too rare. It is the poetry mostly of a tired hedonist, intoxicated with the languors and beauties of the world, yet with just enough sense of their impermanence to cry out for an anodyne his soul cannot find.

Yet for his sense of wonder at the lovely insanities of the universe, where

> "The green earth tilts through a sphere of air
> And bathes in a flame of space,
> With mountains hanging above the stars,
> And stars hung under the sea . . .
> And a sun far off in a shell of silence
> Dapples my walls for me."

for such topsy-turvy beauty, and there is much of it in him, he is to be cherished. For perfection of movement, and its sense of the pitiful yet somehow human nothingness of life, the following poem shows him at his best.

DEAD CLEOPATRA

Dead Cleopatra lies in a crystal casket,
Wrapped and spiced by the cunningest of hands.
Around her neck they have put a golden necklace,
Her tatbebs, it is said, are worn with sands.

Dead Cleopatra was once revered in Egypt——
Warm-eyed she was, this princess of the south.
Now she is very old and dry and faded,
With black bitumen they have sealed up her mouth.

Grave-robbers pulled the gold rings from her fingers,
Despite the holy symbols across her breast;
They scared the bats that quietly whirled above her.
Poor lady! she would have been long since at rest

If she had not been wrapped and spiced so shrewdly,
Preserved, obscene, to mock black flights of years.
What would her lover have said, had he foreseen it?
Had he been moved to ecstasy, or tears?

O sweet clean earth from whom the green blade cometh!—
When we are dead, my best-beloved and I,
Close well above us that we may rest forever,
Sending up grass and blossoms to the sky.

Of Arthur Davison Ficke too it is possible to say distinctive things. His *Sonnets of a Portrait Painter,* 1914, and his lyrics give us a glimpse of the traditional twilight corridors of wonder and romantic pity and love, that is emotional and tender. Some of his sonnets, such as this key-sonnet to the volume, everyone reads and likes.

"I am in love with high far-seeing places
That look on plains half-sunlight and half-storm,
In love with hours when from the circling faces
Veils pass, and laughing fellowship glows warm.
You who look on me with grave eyes where rapture
And April love of living burn confessed—
The Gods are good! the world lies free to capture!
Life has no walls. Oh, take me to your breast!
Take me—be with me for a moment's span!
I am in love with all unveiled faces.

I seek the wonder at the heart of man;
I would go up to the far-seeing places.
While youth is ours, turn toward me for a space
The marvel of your rapture-lighted face!"

Some of his verse narratives too are impressive. "The Man on the Hilltop," the tale of a western sheep herder who crucified himself to save the workers of the world from the baleful effects of Halley's comet, reveals sympathy and a Wordsworthian gift at simple verse narration. Fresh and alive as much of Mr. Ficke's poetry is, and his is a refined and delicate gift, his performance is still, at the age of forty, disappointingly "promising." He is the Walter de la Mare of our lyricists. He raises the level, and keeps it high. His masterpieces, he has yet to produce.

Perhaps most distinctly a personality in this group is Miss Edna St.Vincent Millay. The winning naughtiness of such bits as

"I burn my candle at both ends
It will not last the night,
But ah! my foes, and oh! my friends!
It gives a lovely light,"

is endearing. So too, and more tenderly is

PRAYER TO PERSEPHONE

Be to her, Persephone,
All the things I might not be;
Take her head upon your knee.
She that was so proud and wild,

Flippant, arrogant and free—
She that had no need of me—
Is a little lonely child
Lost in Hell. Persephone,
Take her head upon your knee;
Say to her, "My dear, my dear,
It is not so dreadful here."

"God's World," too, with its rare hush of ecstasy—

"My soul is all but out of me, let fall
No burning leaf! Prithee, let no bird call,"

misses nothing of perfection. She is a lyricist with a winning humor, and tenderness little short of adorable. "Rosemary," simple though it is, is a frail classic that only Miss Millay knows how to build, and "Renascence," that longer poem of her young mysticism, has a quite serious wisdom and wonder that partakes of divine insight. Indeed Miss Millay is a child of the Muses, far more than the others of this group. In a dozen lyrics where she is most herself, she leaves us breathless, breathless with admiration and fear,—admiration that she could do it at all, and fear that she never will again. For her charming impudence,

"Safe upon the solid rock
The ugly houses stand,
Come and see my shining palace
Built upon the sand,"

and her grace in the refinements of humor and

pathos, Miss Millay is already a classic. What tenderness, for instance, in the following

EPITAPH

Heap not on this mound
Roses that she loved so well——
Why bewilder her with roses,
That she cannot see or smell?
She is happy where she lies
With the dust upon her eyes.

Or who else in modern verse can be so irresistibly gay as she is in such a poem as

RECUERDO

We were very tired, we were very merry——
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
It was bare and bright, and smelled like a stable——
But we looked into a fire, we leaned across a table,
We lay on a hill-top underneath the moon;
And the whistles kept blowing, and the dawn came soon.

We were very tired, we were very merry——
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry;
And you ate an apple, and I ate a pear,
From a dozen of each we had bought somewhere;
And the sky went wan, and the wind came cold,
And the sun rose dripping, a bucketful of gold.

We were very tired, we were very merry,
We had gone back and forth all night on the ferry.
We hailed, "Good-morrow, mother!" to a shawl-covered head,
And bought a morning paper, which neither of us read;
And she wept, "God bless you!" for the apples and pears,
And we gave her all our money but our subway fares.

Within the limits she sets, hers is to-day the most individual lyric gift now discovering itself in American poetry. It is the prayer of all lovers of song that her summer may be as lovely as her spring.

Besides Miss Millay, some eight or ten women have written lyrics of some beauty. Of these Sara Teasdale is the most conspicuous. Hers is a large volume of work, with a level uniformly high.

MORNING

I went out on an April morning
All alone, for my heart was high.
I was a child of the shining meadow,
I was a sister of the sky.

There in the windy flood of morning
Longing lifted its weight from me,
Lost as a sob in the midst of cheering,
Swift as a sea-bird out to sea.

The difficulty with her poetry is that too many people can write it. The personal note, or the living romantic glow needed for distinction is lacking. What she gives us is the graceful, the pretty, the polished, but without the gift of interest necessary to the greatest art.

And so, one is tempted, after much reading, to say of the others. Here and there something appears of a little more striking merit. Some of Adelaide Crapsey's "Cinquains," for instance, are quietly impressive.

TRIAD

These be
Three silent things:
The falling snow . . . the hour
Before the dawn . . . the mouth of one
Just dead.

And in her exasperation with her fate as an invalid which she reveals in "To the Dead in the Graveyard Underneath My Window," she compels us to lament with her the quenching of her bright early flame. Hilda Conkling masters a frail beauty in her *Poems by a Little Girl;* and Grace Hazard Conkling's *Afternoons of April,* is a gracious book. Yet others are as gracious, and the list soon becomes appalling; Grace Fallow Norton, Margaret Widdemer, Elinor Wylie, Alice Corbin, Mary Carolyn Davies, Aline Kilmer, Harriet Monroe, Edith Wyatt, Marguerite Wilkinson,—it is incredible that they should all have written poetry! And not all have. Indeed it is well to take most of these lyricists quite sparingly, or one will soon begin to loathe the taste of sugar, "whereof a little more than a little, is by much too much."

In reading the lyrics of the men in this group, a like abstemiousness will, no doubt, prove salutary. Witter Bynner, William Rose Benét, Stephen Vincent Benét, Hermann Hagedorn, Joyce Kilmer, Percy Mackaye, Alan Seeger, Colonel McCrae, Charles Hanson Towne, and John Hall Wheelock, —who indeed wishes to read all of these? Glancing

them through, one notes a few poems that have achieved popularity. Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" pleases many, and Colonel McCrae's "Flanders' Fields" and Alan Seeger's "Rendezvous With Death" are two war poems that look still fresh and new. Some of William Rose Benét has vigor and humor, "The Horse Thief," for instance, who steals a horse and suddenly finds himself winging through space, out past the stars and into the void, his steed turning out to his horror to be Pegasus! Such an experience, however, has been, if one may venture to say so, unusual in this group, as the journeys most of them take consist only of a quiet jog about the well-plotted parks and gardens of English poesy.

With the exceptions noted above, certainly these lyricists are nothing like so interesting as the *new* poets of the preceding section. They lack the freshness, the daring, of those bold experimenters. Though both groups are chiefly artistic in their interests, many of the lyricists have so long imitated the romantic nature songs of the nineteenth century, that their music has become, as someone has said, little more than an attenuated bird twitter. It must be admitted that the *new* poetry has at least delivered us from the boredom of counting daisies, though, as has been said, it has often done so more by a bizarre eccentricity than by a real imaginative insight.

III

The Note of Futility

New England and New York

"And we forgotten be no more
Than twilight on a ruin there."

From the cosmopolitan studios of our imagists and free verse writers and the æsthetic aloofness of our lyricists, the student of our times can derive very little knowledge of the social and spiritual fabric of present-day America. It is a relief to turn from this so-called purer art to an art that is more saturated, more representative of a community, or a point of view, more significant. And it is interesting in this respect to find that the artists whose work has some such background of meaning in it, seem to have, among other traits, a regional significance. The contrast of East with West, for example, one might expect to be a traditional one of old with new, of sophistication with gusto, of a studious futility with a barbaric optimism. And it is interesting to examine the poetry of these two regions to note this warfare and the differing shades of opinion and character in East and Middle West. Is the contrast the one to be expected?

The poet of New England is to-day Robert Frost, and of New York, Edwin Arlington Robinson. Curiously enough a note of futility rather than any

great national or spiritual hope is their bond of union. Like the albuminous Victorians, they represent a culture rather than a class, a philosophy, or an ideal, and that culture, a rather tired one. Neither poet is what is termed social minded; neither one apparently thinks critically of his times, or of labor, class wars, poverty, or the destiny of these states. Nor does either poet aspire to any very mystical intuitions of a natural or supernatural sort. Human nature, books, and a decorative naturalism suffice. Both poets may, indeed, be said to have given up the world: Frost to retire into a seclusion of homely rural nature and self-communings; and Robinson to dwell in psychological analysis and the realms of English literature, a cultivated library recluse. The quiet of an older civilization has laid its hand on them both. What, then, within these limits, have they found to express?

Robert Frost, author of three volumes of poetry, *A Boy's Will,* 1913, *North of Boston,* 1914, and *Mountain Interval,* 1916, after a life of struggles and twenty years of obscurity, is to-day one of the half-dozen major figures in America's poetical firmament. He has arrived there chiefly because of what may be termed the gray competence of his style, and the ability in a half-dozen of his poems to give us the beauty and decadence of rural New England. The grim melancholy and repression of life in *North of Boston* makes the book, as Miss Lowell has said, a very sad one. Life here has lost its opulence.

There is no meaning in it. It is at best but a vacillation between the hard-tack view that

"Good fences make good neighbors,"

and an imagination brooding on death, and shattering itself in futility or insanity. True there are in Frost numerous patches of blue-sky description where nature is fresh and glorious, but the new-made graves are fresh too, and life is gray even under a rain-washed sky.

The poems in his first book, *A Boy's Will,* are with few exceptions simple and a bit insipid. They show us a country youth, writing about rural scenes, and giving us, without much form or emotion, his random dreams and day-by-day experiences with nature. Pretty enough often, but meaningless. "To the Thawing Wind" is, however, a happy exception, reminding us pleasantly of Wordsworth. Few will wish to resist its fresh charm and open pulse.

"Come with rain, O loud Southwester!
Bring the singer, bring the nester;
Give the buried flower a dream;
Make the settled snow bank steam;
Find the brown beneath the white;
But whate'er you do to-night,
Bathe my window, make it flow,
Melt it as the ices go;
Melt the glass and leave the sticks
Like a hermit's crucifix;
Burst into my narrow stall;

Swing the picture on the wall;
Run the rattling pages o'er;
Scatter poems on the floor;
Turn the poet out of door."

That is gay and hilarious enough with its strong verbal beginnings. But this poem alone in the first volume seems to me to have given any promise of the power in *North of Boston,* easily Frost's best book, and the work on which so far his fame must chiefly depend. And "To the Thawing Wind" is by no means typical in its mood of elation of Frost's next book.

North of Boston is the poetry of a back-water civilization. Where the forests once grew there has been a great fire, and now there are only burnt patches and blue-berries in place of the elder monarchs. The meaninglessness of Mending Wall, when there is nothing left for the wall to keep out or let in, illustrates admirably this futility, and so too does the inability of either the conservative or the liberal who mend it, to discover new meanings, new devices in life, to take up their energies. "The Death of the Hired Man" is also interesting from this point of view, as showing the narrow hopeless terms on which New England consents to give her farm laborers life and death. There is a pathos here that is almost painful, a pathos not of the individual but of the creature. Man tied to meanness and the soil. Outside a moon, and a lady on a doorstep spreading her apron to catch its rays; and

inside a ne'er-do-well for a time rolling his old head on a sharp-edged chair back, and then suddenly still, gone drab and dead, and waiting for the undertaker. One has a sense that we are all like that, just hired men who live and die on a grudged bounty, and, as the saying is, amount to nothing. It is in a way the theme of the book.

Nor is this theme diminished if we turn to Frost's one more purely humorous poem, "A Hundred Collars," with its picture of the timid frugal college professor home on a vacation, but dealing more with his formidable mail than with his boyhood companions, and the fat newspaper collector whose collars are now size eighteen and still going up. Here again is the ne'er-do-well, a lover of his kind, with the heart of a poet, one who endows his neighbors with news and good will, and what is he? A drunkard, a random dissatisfied soul, homeless, houseless, and drowning the grief of existence in triviality, talk, and drink. We like him, and we feel sorry for him, but here again the victim is incidental. What we are really sorry for is life. And we are led to ask if it is true that only the Dr. Magoon's "arrive," and the finer natures find nothing to espouse but futility. One is reminded of the undergraduate who once told Mr. Roosevelt that, after all, nothing much seemed worth while, and is led to wonder if in spite of Mr. Roosevelt's roar of disapproval, all of New England that has a soul, has not decided that this is true. Certainly if *North of Boston* is in any

typical sense true, the dominant note in New England is to-day one of a rather tired futility.

But the sense of futility, the ability to portray a tired civilization going to seed, is no sufficient endowment for a poet who has achieved Mr. Frost's rank. He has too an idyllic sense, a sense for beauty, and in the lyric glimpses of natural splendor which he sometimes masters, we get a new kind of quiet loveliness unlike anything else in modern American poetry. Suddenly into the tumult of the scene there slips a calm. The sky breaks open and a flood of peace for a moment possesses the narrative. Such a passage we have already referred to in "The Death of the Hired Man," where Mary sits on the back steps pleading with her husband for Silas. Suddenly the narrative stops and we see as if by magic the meaning of the night.

> "Part of a moon was falling down the west
> Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills.
> Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw
> And spread her apron to it. She put out her hand
> Among the harp-like morning glory strings,
> Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves,
> As if she played unheard the tenderness
> That wrought on him beside her in the night."
> "Warren," she said, "he has come home to die:
> You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time."

Or again, though in a different mood, in "A Hundred Collars," there breaks into the speech of the collector for the *Weekly News,* this astonishing

description of the joy of travelling a country road in a buggy. There is something lovable about the man who could feel this:

"What I like best's the lay of different farms,
Coming out on them from a stretch of woods,
Or over a hill or round a sudden corner.
I like to find folks getting out in spring,
Raking the dooryard, working near the house.
Later they get out further in the fields.
Everything's shut sometimes except the barn;
The family's all away in some back meadow.
There's a hay load a-coming—when it comes,
And later still they all get driven in:
The fields are stripped to lawn, the garden patches
Stripped to bare ground, the apple trees
To whips and poles. There's nobody about.
The chimney though keeps up a good brisk smoking,
And I lie back and ride."

And finally, in the poem "Birches" we have this idyllic joy in nature extending through the entire poem, the theme being that, after all, in life one can do worse than be just what he was as a boy, namely, a master hand at the swinging of birches, thus to tame the beautiful and proud, and leave them

"arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun."

Such things are very beautiful. Their character-

istic is that of a decorative naturalism. But higher than decoration the poet's imagination does not reach. He has no mystical sense. When he enquires deeply of nature concerning death, what we get is some such blank frenzy as seizes on the wife who watches morbidly from the window as her husband digs a grave for their child.

> "I saw you from that very window there
> Making the gravel leap and leap in air,
> Leap up like that, like that, and land so lightly,
> And roll back down the mound beside the hole."

There is indeed, beauty in life, and in nature, but under the beauty is death, and rounding life and its urges, futility.

To step from Frost to Robinson is to go from rural New England to the cultivated environment of a cosmopolitan recluse in the city of New York. Yet though its material changes, Robinson's world, like Frost's, is quiet and sometimes tired, disregarding wearily very much of the tumult of the times. Instead of Frost's simple world, Robinson offers us a world of art, of subtlety, of libraries and books, of curious cultivated persons of immaculate clothes and interesting psychology. He is a poet of infinite polish, infinite care, and impeccable reserve. In him we have less nature and more art. I am not sure that we have more poetry.

The steady level of his poetry may be matched by the steadiness of his career. Since 1890 he has

lived in New York, a bachelor, carefully eschewing wealth and easy occupations, always the serious and diligent, somewhat shy artist. He has, indeed, lived for poetry and nothing else, and the result is to-day a collected volume of six hundred pages. In spite of the assistance of Mr. Roosevelt some years ago, Mr. Robinson has never succeeded in impressing himself on the general American public. His fame has been of slow growth, and with the few. The question arises, how much of a success is it; and how much of it is apt to endure?

And first let us say that as a poet of New York, he does not express the multifariousness of New York, and as a descendent of New England, he expresses little or nothing of its various spirit or scene. His is rather a library culture. Much of his poetry is but the warmings over of English literature, of Malory and Tennyson and the Arthurian legend, and is devoid of reference to the contemporary and the actual. And these retellings are not, be it said, usually very interesting or very important, though they often have in them passages of finish and beauty. One marvels at the unflagging effort spent on "Merlin," or on "Captain Craig," but with the best will in the world attention flags. "Lancelot," his best long poem, is fine writing, exquisite, and in some of its flights, shot full of wonder and romantic longing. But even here some of the faults of the other long poems appear. An oversubtlety, an obscurity in allusion, a minute attention

to the psychology of characters which are but dimly adumbrated in the reader's consciousness, and no very stirring narrative to rouse or hold attention, all these are faults and obvious ones, which neither these nor any other poems can afford to stagger under. It is useless to deny it, most of Robinson's longer works are dull, and will not, like Browning, to whom Robinson has often been compared in obscurity and subtlety, repay the reader with pearls of pleasure for his deep diving into their waters.

What then may the reader who takes a seat by the library fire with this poet expect? Is it worth while? I for one think it is, and for the sake of perhaps a dozen short poems, and a point of view. Let us imagine the setting. It is that of a fireside room done in brown tones, quiet and rich with human meanings. Our host a reserved, though quietly genial scholar and poet, intent on contemplation of life and its motives and mysteries. Not that we get the impression that our host has himself lived much of life. That question does not at first arise. Himself he keeps in the background, well subdued into the brown tones of the study. He is the detached observer. And the life he observes is, therefore, also always a little detached and mysterious. Of his hero, Richard Cory, for instance, the impeccable person who committed suicide, the poet knows only what a neighbor might know; and of Flammonde, only of his good deeds and that there was a heart to his mystery never quite solved. Indeed, as

we sit and hear our host descant on these former neighbors of his, glossing his comments with the high illumination of Shakespeare or Ben Jonson, and teasing us with touches of beauty and elusiveness, the thought suddenly strikes one that the host is after all quite as much a mystery as any he has discovered. And we find ourselves thinking: yes, but what of you? Why have you not lived more than to sit here and contemplate these odd people? And when we arrive there, we are already one with the host, and are in the mood to produce, psychologically at least, one of Mr. Robinson's best poems. For all his best poems are about men who were in some sense mysterious. The point of view, therefore, which the visitor at Mr. Robinson's fire will acquire is that of the romance in human motive. It is perhaps his chief contribution to his time.

These romances, or mysteries of character, which his best verses celebrate may be briefly indicated. Flammonde, for instance, is the modern Christ, a man who never himself succeeded, but who at the right points touched other lives vitally into success. What devil at his heart gnawed him out of the destinies that were his right we are left to conjecture. "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford," shows Jonson ruminating, and striving to unravel the heart of Shakespeare's mystery. In "The Master," Lincoln appears, "Laconic—and Olympian," and in "Calverly's," the snows of oblivion gradually eliminate all that was once so loving and lovely

in the lives of the old charmed circle which the poet knew, a circle, like most, of evanescent Bohemians, haunting, delightful, and now no more to earth than the dead moons of Ilion. Such a list could be impressively extended, and it is, I think, important in its ability to let us into the poet's psychology. His are the passions of reminiscence, of observation, repression, and leisure, in short the passions of the studious observer, and not of the full-blooded liver of life. And so the secondary and derivative character of his poetry becomes clear, and it is easy to see why his successes are of so limited a nature. He has taken his stand as an observer and questioner, rather than as a partaker, and so he turns naturally to those careers and characters that are, like his own, romantic, aloof, and somewhat homeless.

But these mysteries of character, aurad as they are with the dim halo of futility, are not always sad. Sometimes they compass a humorous futility, sometimes the emphasis is intellectual, a puzzle, and sometimes as in "Calverly's," the futility is that of a friendly and pathetic romanticism. "Minerva Cheevy" is, for instance, a fine satire on the æsthetic-sham hero who longed for a distant romance in Thebes and Camelot, but who made drink instead of poetry his New York anodyne. "Uncle Ananias" glorifies charmingly a romantic liar; and "Old King Cole" adds unction to reserve in giving us a portrait of the old Dutch hedonist whose continental repose not even his wicked sons could shake.

Then in a more romantic vein, "Flammonde" gives us the royal vagabond who is a prince of peace, who has the gift to live in the world, nor care for its follies, be human, and yet glimpse for others at least some of life's ultimate horizons. He escapes from life without disaster, even though he is a kind of benevolent Wandering Jew, mysterious, and hiding his secret under a mask. We have a teasing hint that such benefactors do not usually escape crucifixion.

> "Rarely at once will nature give
> The power to be Flammonde and live,"

though why their benefactions should meet with such a return, I for one do not know. In a cooler romantic vein is that polished tragedy "Richard Cory," the man about town, rich, clean-favored, imperially slim, a man apparently without a flaw or grief, who yet one calm summer night, much to the world's surprise, and the reader's horror,

> "Went home and put a bullet through his head."

Why? That is for us to wonder. Perhaps the empty glitter of perfection filled him, or some secret horror seized on his mind and oppressed him, or it may be that he needed a flaw or sin to live by—we are left in doubt. To me, however, the greatest of Robinson's poems is "Calverly's," a poem fine and friendly with the wines of romance, and the pathos of old friendships gone, and the mystery and doubt

that awaits the dreamers of this world. It seems to me richer, and more freighted with passion than any of the others.

We go no more to Calverly's,
For there the lights are few and low;
And who are there to see by them,
Or what they see, we do not know.
Poor strangers of another tongue
May now creep in from anywhere,
And we, forgotten, be no more
Than twilight on a ruin there.

We two, the remnant. All the rest
Are cold and quiet. You nor I,
Nor fiddle now, nor flagon-lid,
May ring them back from where they lie.
No fame delays oblivion
For them, but something yet survives:
A record written fair, could we
But read the book of scattered lives.

There'll be a page for Leffingwell,
And one for Lingard, the moon-calf;
And who knows what for Clavering,
Who died because he couldn't laugh?
Who knows or cares? No sign is here,
No face, no voice, no memory;
No Lingard with his eerie joy,
No Clavering, no Calverly.

We cannot have them here with us
To say where their light lives are gone,
Or if they be of other stuff
Than are the moons of Ilion.

So, be their place of one estate
With ashes, echoes, and old wars,—
Or ever we be of the night,
Or we be lost among the stars.

Yet those who read Robinson long, will feel in him, I think, as in Frost, a certain narrowness and stinginess. In him there is certainly not God's plenty, not perhaps even New York's plenty. As a critic of life we must feel his inadequacy, and as a poet his ineffectual sterility. Passion certainly is not his, but in its place resignation, reserve, smooth irony, and at best a dim romantic wonder at the idleness of fate. He has perhaps avoided danger, and has lived frugally on his income—but his is the fate of all those who prefer safety to adventure and a chance of ruin; he will not greatly endow his descendants at his decease. Nevertheless, though he lacks opulence, he has set standards of workmanship that achieve distinction, and has given us in a dozen of his poems, worth that will not quickly cease.

In the line of years Frost and Robinson more closely resemble the albuminous Victorians than they do our poets of a national or naturalistic bent. Whitman's mystical ecstasy, his confidence in the universe has never caught them; nor do they thrill with Moody's passion for social justice, or experience with him the soul-transforming mystery of Good Friday Night. To the higher reaches of spiritual joy, to the wider meanings of national destiny, Frost and Robinson seem quite indifferent,

or at least skeptical. The excitements of life they have waved aside to consult its calms. And so we see them carrying on the great traditions of English poetry, but with the left hand: in New England, Frost, submerged in the personal world of man and nature, vacuously idle, a mere swinger of birches; and in New York, Robinson, submerged in the fastidious, in the subtleties of books and men, a frugal, though friendly futilitarian, burning in his study a candle that is almost done.

IV

The Rise of the Middle West

"Chicago! Hog butcher for the world!"

Though painful to many people as the stab of a knife, the above line gives at a glance the distance of Chicago from New York. I may be brutal, but at least I am not a futilitarian, may well be the message of the city whose slogan is the well known deadly vow, *I will.* What of the poetry of such a city, and how does it compare with the brown tones and studies in gray of the New York and Boston poets?

Many observers think that Chicago is to-day developing a civilization of its own, a civilization that enamels character, glorifies wealth, strength, and speed, and is Titanically cynical of the virtues. In the spirit of the city's leading daily, in the novels

that pour from its presses, in its gun play, its unmastered political quarrels, and labor troubles, and in the work of its two most representative poets, Masters and Sandburg, the spirit of this strength, or if you prefer, of this decadence masquerading as strength, seizes on the beholder. That the quietudes of time will eventually roar down even Chicago, one may confidently anticipate, till it is as weary of strife as Boston or New York. Then its poets will no doubt become less conscious of the stream of things, and turn away from the barbaric glorification of Demos to the source of all true poetry, the life of nature and the life of the individual. But though in New England and New York that day has been long upon us, in Chicago it has not yet come.

Of perhaps six major figures in American poetry to-day, three, Lindsay, Masters, and Sandburg, are poets of Illinois. Then too, the promising young poet of Indian life, Lew Sarett, and the late B. L. T., live or lived in Chicago. It is there since 1912 that Miss Monroe, with the assistance of the poet Miss Eunice Tietjens, has published her Poetry Magazine; there of late Maxwell Bodenheim publishes his slight volumes; and only William Ellery Leonard at the University of Wisconsin, is a trifle out of the center which Chicago, with some excuse, stoutly maintains is to-day the literary center of America.*

* Even the universities join the movement as patrons and producers. *Michigan* sustains Robert Frost, and *Miami* has Percy Mackaye; and the Universities of Illinois, and Chicago, have already published the first mid-west anthologies of student poetry:

This is at least a spectacular geographical change from the Harvard generation of poets that preceded. What, if anything, does it mean? Is the prophecy made to Matthew Arnold by one of Chicago's aspiring citizens that Chicago once she got started would "make culture hum," about to be fulfilled?

Certainly the volume of work put out by these writers is in itself surprising. Masters has in six years become the author of seven stout volumes; Lindsay has written four; Sandburg, four; Sarett, two; B. L. T., four; and William Ellery Leonard, three. In all of these there must necessarily be much waste-basket poetry. Yet whatever may be said of its quality, there can be no complaint as to its saturation, its representative fidelity to the spirit of the times. More than any other group in America, these poets are alive, in earnest, seizing with the zest of youth the talismans of the world. Masters and Sandburg are cynical realists, historians of the brutality, lusts, and beauty of the Middle West. Lindsay is an optimist, chanting in measures of syncopation the twin gospels of beauty and decent politics. Leonard points the unerring finger of justice at our crimes toward the negro and the conscientious objectors. And Sarett alone is romantic, concerned with the far spaces, with the life of the natural Indian,

Illini Poetry: 1918-1923; and *Verse, by the Poetry Club of Chicago University,* (Covici-McGee, 1923); books whose level is, for poetry of its kind, surprisingly high.

and lifts his eyes from the tumult of present times, to the primitive dream-world of the past. Let us look at their work a little more in detail to note the significance and quality of their productions.

I

Edgar Lee Masters (1869-) born in Kansas, educated at Knox, and in his father's law office in Illinois, had published some six volumes of poems, plays in blank verse, and essays, without fame, when in 1915 his *Spoon River Anthology* made him over night an international figure. This success he followed with five fairly interesting but undistinguished volumes of sketches, lyrics, and psychological ruminations, somewhat dulling the general interest in him. As a result, his next work of distinction, the *Domesday Book,* 1920, a coroner's study of a life whose circle finally includes the world, has had less attention than it merits. Yet these two books are, with the exception of the work of Sandburg, the most ambitious offering any American poet now living has made us. They reveal life in a comprehensive way, from a consistent point of view. We may dislike that point of view; but we should, as in judging *Gulliver's Travels,* recognize the power with which it is presented, even if that power is accompanied, as it is in Swift and Masters, with a somewhat horrid laughter. These lambent intellects, though they blast like lightning often as they strike, illuminate a whole landscape.

By this time every one has read *Spoon River,* that biting series of grave-yard portraits of a small town in Illinois. Its importance, therefore, may be briefly indicated. It is an example, as Mr. Carl Van Doren has pointed out, of the revolt-from-the-village tendency in American fiction, a link between Ed Howe's *Story of a Country Town,* Hamlin Garland's *Main Traveled Roads,* and Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street.* This revolt in Masters takes two forms: the first, a chiefly destructive revolt against Puritanism in art, morals, manners, and religion. This Puritanism is presented as causing much of the decadence of American life, of the futility that toned down Robinson and made Frost's characters inert, and many of Spoon River's troubles may be so accounted for. And secondly, the revolt is in the form of a raging irony, an attack on insensibility to beauty, against our greed in business and our corruption in politics. As an antidote to Puritanism *Spoon River* offers us, by implication, Freudian psychology, and its ideal of obedience to rather than repression of our fundamental desires. For the book's crisp ironic art, and characterizing ability (we do remember its persons: Lucius Atherton, the toothless, discarded, rural Don Juan; Daisy Fraser, the woman of the town whose fines kept the school fund growing; Minerva Jones, the village poetess, and her tragedy; Searcy Foote who killed his paralytic and rich aunt so that he could marry and go to college; and Frank Drummer who at twenty-five died, trying to memor-

ize the *Encyclopædia Britannica*); for these and a hundred other unforgettable portraits, and for the book's local color, and robust even if crude force, we must recognize the importance of these etchings in acid.

Nor need we deny its defects: the one sidedness which it shares with *Main Street* as a portrait of the small town; and its denuded imagination. Warmth, love, color, joy, the spiritual life, make no one glow with pleasure as he reads these pages. These are indeed, rough caresses, and Mr. Masters is no companion for those who would live in the spirit. His passions are rather those of the cynical lawyer and muckraker, with a tendency to dwell on the meaner aspects of men and things. He has a somewhat morbid interest in sex, and a barbaric delight in stripping life bare of all its sheltering conventions. His is the irresistible desire that now and then overcomes idealists as well as nihilists, the wish to see everything naked. It is, therefore, to be expected that persons who prefer the clothed world should not care for him.

And it is this desire to reduce life to what he considers its essentials, to see life bare, that animates him in his *Domesday Book*. The grave-yard, the morgue, the house of ill fame, the illicit meeting of clandestine lovers at beach or hotel room, these are the scenes that he resorts to most for his material. It is not surprising, therefore, in *The Domesday Book* to find that we are to sit in at an inquest, to

discover the cause of the sudden death of Elenor Murray, a girl of twenty-eight just back from nursing soldiers in France, and to diagnose with the coroner—a Harvard man of imagination and means, living in Illinois—America's social diseases. Well, it is an intelligent inquest, one must grant that; and Elenor Murray, though no better than she should be, was an interesting person. She is, we are told, a symbol of America. But that, I for one, will beg leave to doubt; though of certain groups in America —the Bohemian art group, the radical group, and the dissolute materialistic group in college or business—she is more or less typical.

The technique of this novel in verse, with its gradual unravelling of the mystery of her life and death as seen in the views of some thirty persons, is as fascinating as a detective story. The scheme is like Browning's *Ring and the Book.* The blank verse is competent and not monotonous; though it lacks the imagination that makes *The Ring and the Book* now and then burst into flame. Nor is the characterization so good as in Mr. Masters' *Spoon River.* The conversation partakes of psychological states and discussions, is interesting as evidence, but somehow, except in a few cases, Alma Bell, Elenor Murray, the coroner Merival, and Arielle, fails to characterize.

Why, then, is the book important? And the answer is as a view of life, and as a slice of life. The view here is not cynical as in *Spoon River,* but

various: all sides speak, the idealist, the mystic, the cynic, the satirist, the Freudian, the artist, and so on. What unites them is the free air of inquiry, an open clinic where all ideas are entertained, and none are held intolerable. And the slice of life is also various. Though chiefly a study of the unbalanced opulence that made the heroine shatter her abilities in an excess of sex, it also studies the ethics and aims of the modern world, and tries to arrive at a view of the heroic life. Yet in spite of the variety of views expressed, it is clear that Mr. Masters chose Elenor Murray as a heroine chiefly because she had no emotional repressions; she was primitive, natural, and obeyed her impulses without conventional remorse. She suffered persecution from Puritans, and even from Puritanism in her illicit lovers, but she persisted tenaciously, without malice, to seek for gratification by following her emotions. And this, one gathers, is the author's notion of the heroic in life: to obey your fundamental impulses and let society wreak whatever vengeance on you it will. Whether you are a courtezan or Socrates matters not. It is the same force that drives you both, the life force, and it is better to suffer with your temperament, than to conform, shrivel up, and be safe without it. It is the weakness of Mr. Masters that between these two extremes he finds so little middle ground.

Think as we may of the quality and health of such productions, it is noticeable that Mr. Masters has

given us a view of life unknown to the American poetry of previous decades. It is the view one finds in such realistic European naturalists as Strindberg, or Tolstoy, where the imagination, divorced from convention and denuded of humor or romance, becomes morbid, obsessed with eroticism and decay. It is, too, like Balzac in its view of life as a creature always driven by a master passion; in Masters, usually only the one passion. His is the school of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary,* or in America to-day of Theodore Dreiser, or Ben Hecht, and his *Literary Times.* The rage for sex, the preoccupation with the grave, with life as a tale told indeed by an idiot, is a rage that may easily drive its possessors into madness. One is reminded of the hard rage of Swift, and of his obsession with sex, and with all grossness and decay, and expects, as in his case, to see these modern nihilists—Strindberg, Dostoievsky, Flaubert,—the roll is ominous,—Masters, when they die, die first at the top. Indeed, insanity may well become a refuge to the spirits who, like these, have looked too long upon the turning wheels of vicissitude. Balance, beauty, humor, romance, spiritual joy, what gifts for a poet to lack! Mr. Masters lacks them all; and yet he has achieved something very like greatness. In the dark regions of the goddess perversity there are no doubt many hells. In the grim daylight of a sordid modern day in America, one of her poets has spoken. Surely his place shall be honorable.

II

Masters' cynical hopelessness as to political or social reform contrasts sharply with a poet whose work, despite disillusion, still preserves a fighting faith in human nature. And strangely enough this faith reveals itself most poignantly at a lynching. William Ellery Leonard (1876-) of the University of Wisconsin was apparently shocked into his bitter democracy by our world war, and the contrast so painfully evident between our practice and our preaching. *The Lynching Bee*, 1920, is a gun pointed straight at our heads. Its title poem is the gruesome narrative of how a group of decent American men and women in automobiles gather together, and burn a negro alive at the stake. It is accurately set down, nothing spared, the stripping and chaining of the negro, the mother who lights the fire, the doomed man's shrieks as he is gelded and roasted, how his eyes are put out, and the civilized honk of the auto horns squawking in ironic accompaniment, while overhead all the while we see like some blood symbol of an African Voodoo,

> "the new moon hang,
> Keen as a knife, bent like a boomerang,
> A witch's bangle in the Zodiac."

Mr. Leonard has done other excellent things, some in this volume on the brutalities at our Federal prisons during the war, and some on our lack of indus-

trial democracy; but *The Lynching Bee* is his best work. It arouses and shocks and creates moral energy. It is a blow at damnation, and yet not a yellow-journal poem. Such an ode, for so it is, far outweighs in poetic as well as moral weight Mr. Leonard's more conventionally pleasing lyrics, such as *Indian Summer* or some of his early work in *Sonnets and Poems,* 1906.*

But not all in the Middle West is social progress, or cynicism, lust, or the brutalities of power. Going south from Chicago one finds, or found, Lew Sarett at the University of Illinois writing his Indian songs and dances and war chants, *Many, Many Moons,* 1920, and *The Box of God,* 1922. The poem that gives the title to the second volume, a fairly extended elegy on the death of the poet's friend, Indian Joe. is Mr. Sarett's best poem. With its color, its cool blues and Indian reds, and with its limpid waters, and sense of the great mysterious mountains of the West,

> "Where dusk dew-lidded slips among the valleys
> Soft as a blue wolf walking in thick wet moss,"

the poem is rich, and fresh as the dawn or the dew. The pathos too of the Indian's death revisited at

* One very striking sonnet, however, deserves mention even there, Kaiser William in Bonn, where we are told of that great man, among other things,

> "With hand on rein and helmet on the head
> The Kaiser comes—and every inch a King!"

But nothing is more cruel to-day than the raising of such ghosts!

the last by his tribal gods of the mountain, is finely felt, and the inserting of broken bits of French and Indian dialect, by some strange alchemy adds elevation and charm to the lyric passages of recollection and description. The poem is too long to quote, and it is unfair to it to give selections, for its power is as much cumulative as it is in particular bits. It quite dwarfs Mr. Sarett's other lyrics and chants, pleasing and even exciting as these often are, especially when chanted and danced by the author himself. Mr. Sarett is to-day our most distinguished reciter of Indian chants. *The Box of God* is the best Indian poem we have produced. There is a haunting broken lilt to the metre that is capable alike for dialect and imaginative lift. In the poetry of 1921 when it received the Helen Haire Levinson Poetry Prize, it was easily first, and would indeed adorn any decade able to produce it. In this poem Mr. Sarett definitely announces his arrival among America's permanent poets. If he can continue work of this order, his publications will become like some of those of Sandburg and Masters and Lindsay, national events, But Sarett and Leonard are both yet minor poets, historians of a phase, the one an Indian relique, the other bitter in social reform. Both are individualists, one in order to embrace paganism, the other to set limits to lawlessness and law. Neither is so rounded or representative as the others of this aspiring decade.

III

A poet of wider significance is Vachel Lindsay (1879-) a poet who living "farthest south," in Springfield, gives to the town the first fame it has had since Abraham Lincoln was buried there in the dishonoring and ugly sarcophagus in which Illinois still houses her greatest son. Would that her poet could with a mighty gesture tear it away and induce her citizens to erect in its stead a memorial, grand and brooding as the spirit of Lincoln itself, a shrine indeed for patriots!

Some of Lindsay, be it said at the beginning, is, like some of Alfred Noyes, facile, and silly. "The beauteous Irish lady that gives potatoes eyes," for instance, is to say the least, not a happy idea even for a child lyric. Children have rights as well as the rest of us! However, a poet is not, unless he is very unlucky, famed for his weaknesses, and Lindsay is in his best work lively and beautiful. Chiefly a poet of jazz rhythms, he is a new kind of singer, for he raises jazz by means of chant and rhythm to a large vocal democratic and sometimes lyric expressiveness. He selects, too, with acumen just those topics that lend themselves to such treatment: the negro race, the Salvation Army, the caliope, Mr. Bryan. In his vocalism and in his genuine brotherly expansiveness he shows the influence of Whitman, though his rhythms and metres are regular as heart could wish. Other poets have written to be read,

but Lindsay's poems read themselves. They are a whole brass band, a hoe-down, a negro camp-meeting, and an Indian dance rolled into rhyme. Such movements, such colors, such excitement! It is the spirit of jazz turned into poetry. Will it live? Who knows? But while it lives it will furnish pleasure—that can hardly be doubted.

A poem of jazz rhythms, with many couplets but no definite rhyme scheme, with many shifts of metrical form, slow to fast, solemn to gay, "The Congo" is as easy and flexible as the dance itself. The thing is a riot of color and sound-pictures, a combination of African animism and its beasts, with American cake-walks, red silk hats, and cheap jewelry. It has too the negro evangelism in it, jazzed also, and their rather tinny heaven. Part One is Africa; Part Two, a jazz dance revel; and Part Three is Voodooism changed to an ebony Methodism. Tinsel, but real, and a masterly performance! It is an education in chanting to learn to read it, and it justifies fully the experiments of John Hay, Harte, Carleton, and Riley to try to express things American colloquially. "The Congo" is alive, even if not very high, and is far sounder and far more readable than the wastes of sickly imitation-poetry that so many of our respectable magazines mar their poetical reputations with by printing.

"General William Booth Enters Into Heaven," does for the Salvation Army what "The Congo"

did for the negro race. It gives it vocal expression, and with its jazz adds just that touch of the meretricious needed to show up as well as to show off that institution. The first two lines give us the key:

> "Booth led boldly with his big bass drum—
> (Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)"

Fustian plus the gospel, with its echo—merely a Salvation Army echo, of the sublime. And the saints, we see, expect Booth, though it is easy to see that they too are only Salvation Army saints. The two high points of the poem, "Jesus came from out the court-house door," and "He saw King Jesus," have offended many readers, but I think foolishly. They are suited to show the homeliness of the Salvation Army imagination. Vulgar, but why not?

But Lindsay's high energy is not always employed in the service of the spirit of jazz. "The Chinese Nightingale," the dream tale of a Chinese laundryman in San Francisco, is more delicately tinged, with the romance and oriental colorings of a musical comedy. It is sweet in spirit, elevated, and tender with a wistful love. It has the oriental background of Karma, of birth, death, rebirth, and death; but the red thread of love unites all the beads of these lovers' various half-remembered lives. The echo of these lives is the song of the Chinese nightingale, I take it, and it is that which gives the haunting melody,

"'I remember, I remember
That spring came on forever,
That spring came on forever,'
Said the Chinese nightingale."

Here we have the refrain still, that was used so tellingly in "The Congo" and "General Booth," but softened, and colored so as to unify and poetize the pictures that flow in kaleidoscopic change before us. And what magic pictures they are, that this mystical bird of the imagination nightly unrolls to the sight of this humble Chinese laundry-man!

"Then sang the bird, so strangely gay,
Fluttering, fluttering, ghostly and gray,
A vague, unravelling, final tune,
Like a long unwinding, silk cocoon;
Sang as though for the soul of him
Who ironed away in that bower dim:

"I have forgotten
Your dragons great,
Merry and mad and friendly and bold.
Dim is your proud lost palace-gate.
I vaguely know
There were heroes of old,
Troubles more than the heart could hold,
There were wolves in the woods,
Yet lambs in the fold,
Nests in the top of the almond tree . . .
The evergreen tree . . . and the mulberry tree . . .
Life and hurry and joy forgotten,
Years on years I but half-remember . . .
Man is a torch, then ashes soon,
May and June, then dead December,

Dead December, then again June.
Who shall end my dream's confusion?
Life is a loom, weaving illusion . . . . .
I remember, I remember
There were ghostly veils and laces . . . .
In the shadowy bowery places . . . . .
With lovers' ardent faces
Bending to one another,
Speaking each his part.
They infinitely echo
In the red cave of my heart.
'Sweetheart, sweetheart, sweetheart',
They said to one another.
They spoke, I think of perils past.—
They spoke I think of peace at last.
One thing I remember:
'Spring came on forever,
Spring came on forever,'
Said the Chinese nightingale."

In a more formal manner we have his patriotic and war lyrics, chief of which is "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight," a ballad slow, stately, and dignified, but lacking the fusing power necessary to make it live. It is good but not great, not, for example, so great as pieces like Whittier's "Barbara Frietsche," or Longfellow's "Paul Revere," which, hackneyed though they be, would never have become hackneyed had they not once given off some sparks. And a similar criticism will apply to the "Eagle That Is Forgotten," and "On the Building of Springfield." They have interest, sobriety, and patriotic, even a cultural fervor. But they do not

quite kindle. We admire and we approve such sentiments as the following,

> "We should build parks that students from afar
> Would choose to starve in rather than go home—
> Fair little squares with Phidian ornament—
> Food for the spirit, milk and honeycomb.
>
> Songs shall be sung by us in that good day—
> Songs we have written—blood within the rhyme
> Beating, as when old England still was glad,
> The purple, rich, Elizabethan time.
>
> Some city on the breast of Illinois
> No wiser and no better at the start,
> By faith shall rise redeemed—by faith shall rise,
> Bearing the western glory in her heart."

But such sentiments are here felt in the judgment, not in the heart. There is somehow too much gospel in this beauty.

In a more pleasing manner are his children's poems. These show often a charming fancy, and are delightful and sometimes, as in "The Mouse That Gnawed the Oak Tree Down," quaint and shrewd.

Lindsay's is a down-state quiet and optimism, an easy view of an America whose spirit is still evangelical, though its dance steps may for the moment be in "rag time." As our chief need is beauty, and our chief religion a gospel, he unites the two, and preaches his gospel of beauty. Yet one poem like "The Chinese Nightingale" will prove more effectual, one ventures, in the new warfare against

the Philistines, than all his "adventures," rhymes to be sold for bread, and beating time to jazz and college yells. There is a fustian, a cheapness in all this that violates more beauty than it creates.

IV

The chief figure in middle western poetry, the poet who unites in himself many of the interests which these other writers suggest or touch on merely, and perhaps the chief figure in American poetry since Whitman, is Carl Sandburg. In his book there is a large massiveness, a variety, and a stirring, that is vastly nearer the heart of things than either Masters' cynicism or Lindsay's optimism. Big, lumbering, Swedish, amorphic, kindly, and crude, class-conscious, and violently humanitarian, Sandburg may best be described as a clay-footed Titan. With his elephantine hands he holds now the pen of an etcher whose work is in the cool blues of Lake Michigan or in the grim red flames of those furnaces that by night illuminate her dark waters. And then, wearied with the delicacies of color and restraint, he flings the pen aside, and stalks with Cyclopean steps about the little whirling streets of his city, flinging magnetic curses, and piling job on job, and pashing out with those big unheeding feet of his whatever delicate flower of art or life is unlucky enough to come in his way. Until, tired with his debauch of strength, the Titan feels contrition, and so goes all

the more tenderly back to his skillful etchings in color and flame.

Born of Swedish stock, his father a railroad worker, Carl Sandburg went to school until thirteen in Galesburg, Illinois. From then until seventeen he worked at various jobs, driving a milk wagon, portering at a barber shop, shifting scenes in a theater, working on a truck in a brick factory, making balls in a pottery. Then he went west as far as Denver, working in the wheat fields, on railroad construction gangs, as a dish-washer in hotels in Denver and Omaha, and then back to Galesburg to learn the painter's trade. The Spanish-American War sent the private at twenty-one home with $100.00, and after missing a trial at West Point, he went to Lombard College in Galesburg for his degree. There he edited his college paper and got interested in poetry, politics, and newspapers, and in all three fields he has labored since. His first book, *Chicago Poems,* 1916, created immediate attention as the chants of a vital revolutionist, able to some extent to bend the bow of Walt Whitman. *Corn Huskers,* 1918, *Smoke and Steel,* 1920, and *Slabs of the Sunburnt West,* 1922, have deepened that impression, and added to it that of an amorphic giant who is master of a new thing —the etching done in color.

Would you see him in his finest manner as the skillful and loving etcher, read in *Chicago Poems* so slight a sketch as the following justly celebrated fragment.

Fog

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Or in *Cornhuskers* read "Cool Tombs," where slang and beauty combine in a spiritual union to show the poet at his best. There is an elation and peace here quite beyond the powers of most modern poets.

Cool Tombs

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he forgot the copperheads and the assassin . . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street, cash and collateral turned ashes, . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she remember? . . . in the dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti and blowing tin horns . . . tell me if the lovers are losers . . . tell me if they get more than the lovers . . . in the dust . . . in the cool tombs.

And what artlessness and what art in the following seemingly random musings in *Slabs of the Sunburnt West.*

Washington Monument at Night

1

The stone goes straight.
A lean swimmer dives into night sky,
Into half-moon mist.

2

Two trees are coal black.
This is a great white ghost between.
It is cool to look at.
Strong men, strong women, come here.

3

Eight years is a long time
To be fighting all the time.

4

The republic is a dream.
Nothing happens unless first a dream.

5

The wind bit hard at Valley Forge one Christmas.
Soldiers tied rags on their feet.
Red footprints wrote on the snow . . .
. . . and stone shoots into stars here
. . . into half-moon mist to-night.

6

Tongues wrangled dark at a man.
He buttoned his overcoat and stood alone.
In a snowstorm, red hollyberries, thought,
he stood alone.

7

Women said: He is lonely
. . . fighting . . . fighting . . . eight years . . .

8

The name of an iron man goes over the world.
It takes a long time to forget an iron man.

9

. . . .
. . . .

And then in daring contrast, to see Mr. Sandburg in his more barbaric manner, read the Billy Sunday imitation and criticism, "To a Contemporary Bunk Shooter"; or read "Wilderness," a poem that, after a specific enumeration of the animals that ark-wise inhabit the breast of the poet, ends with the following interior climax:

"O, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie inside my ribs, under my bony head, under my red-valve heart . . . and I got something else: it is a man-child heart, a woman-child heart: it is a father and mother and lover: it came from God-knows-where; it is going to God-knows-where—For I am the keeper of the zoo: I say yes and no: I sing and kill and work: I am a pal of the world: I came from the wilderness."

And in like strain, but with much more of the fat and gristle of Chicago in it, look at

GALOOTS

Galoots, you hairy, hankering,
Snousle on the bones you eat, chew at the gristle and lick the last of it.

Grab off the bones in the paws of other galoots . . . hook your claws in their sleazy mouths—snap and run.
If long-necks sit on their rumps and sing wild cries to the winter moon, chasing their tails to the flickers of foolish stars . . . let 'em howl.

Galoots fat with too much, galoots lean with too little, galoot millions and millions, snousle and snicker on, plug your exhausts, hunt your snacks of fat and lean, grab off yours.

This is certainly like and yet unlike Walt Whitman. His precepts it puts into practice, though it is, after all, not much in his spirit. This joy in crudity was not quite his. Nor was the class hatred, the bolshevik desire to level, seen in these and the following poems, one of Whitman's desires. His democracy was saner, better proportioned, less Titanic. The man who writes "Gargoyle" has revolution in his heart, as well as a kind of wild love, and would, at least for the moment, as soon lynch as reform the capitalist.

GARGOYLE

I saw a mouth jeering. A smile of melted red iron ran over it. Its laugh was full of nails rattling. It was a child's dream of a mouth.

A fist hit the mouth: knuckles of gun-metal driven by an electric wrist and shoulder. It was a child's dream of an arm.

The fist hit the mouth over and over, again and again. The mouth bled melted iron and laughed its laughter of nails rattling.

And I saw the more the fist pounded the more the mouth laughed. The fist is pounding and pounding, and the mouth answering.

That certainly, whatever one thinks of its doctrine, is as superb a piece of industrial symbolism as one can wish! In "Soup," there is even more of the revolutionist's ironic scorn. How easily greatness is tumbled down to the common level! And what cool delight the author takes in bagging it.

SOUP

I saw a famous man eating soup.
I say he was lifting a fat broth
Into his mouth with a spoon.
His name was in the newspaper that day
Spelled out in tall black headlines
And thousands of people were talking about him.

When I saw him
He sat bending his head over a plate
Putting soup in his mouth with a spoon.

Though perhaps too that is a bit pathetic!

Dislike of the rich, love of the common man, of the dirty and oppressed, passionate dislike and violent love, these are two of Mr. Sandburg's favorite motives; though he is so opulent an artist that he is not limited to these. He glories in the glamors and brutalities of Chicago, the city he describes in his most famous poem, as "Hog butcher for the world; the Stormy, husky, brawling City of the Big Shoulders," and another view of which again in his latest

volume, *Slabs of the Sunburnt West* he elaborates with beauty and exhilaration as "The Windy City," where by the turquoise lake

> "The living lighted skyscrapers stand
> Spotting the blue dusk with checkers of yellow."

And a little later on with what rare beauty he combines the hog motive with this swift little dream of other cities! And yet by some magic it does not seem incongruous.

> "It is easy to come here a stranger and show the whole works, write a book, fix it all up—it is easy to come and go away a muddle-headed pig, a bum and a bag of wind.
>
> Go to it and remember this city fished from its depths a text: 'Independent as a hog on ice.'
> Venice is a dream of soft waters, Vienna and Bagdad recollections of dark spears and wild turbans; Paris is a thought in Monet gray on scabbards, fabrics, façades; London is a fact in a fog filled with the moaning of transatlantic whistles; Berlin sits amid white scrubbed quadrangles and torn arithmetics and testaments; Moscow brandishes a flag and repeats a dance figure of a man who walks like a bear.
> Chicago fished from its depths a text: 'Independent as a hog on ice.'"

Sandburg glories in the tang of reality, wishes to swear at you, get you dirty, kick you, and strip you of your civilizing reticences, just as Chicago does. He is a rough democrat in his way, and sings of the

slums, of its niggers and dagoes and Greeks, and greasers, its pimps and harlots, and bulls, as well as of its dance halls, naked prize-fighters, mothers suckling the young, and Jews selling fish "with a joy identical to that of Pavlowa's dancing." Here, indeed, if anywhere, is the saturation and gusto of Chicago!

Yet not all is sordid. There is even in some of these red-flag lyrics a warm friendliness, and touches of the mysticism of time and change. Everybody, for instance, must like Jack, the hero of one of Sandburg's shoulder-clapping sketches in *Chicago Poems*, a "swarthy, swaggering son-of-a-gun" who had a hard life and was happy. And how admirable too when one finds this rude poet sensitive to spiritual feelings, to touches of mysticism, to the presence of the unseen powers that work behind the veil. "A Fence" gives us something of these feelings, showing us time and nature in their classic rôles again as the greatest of democrats.

A Fence

Now the stone house on the lake front is finished and the workmen are beginning the fence.

The palings are made of iron bars with steel points that can stab the life out of any man who falls on them.

As a fence, it is a masterpiece, and will shut off the rabble and all vagabonds and hungry men and all wandering children looking for a place to play.

Passing through the bars and over the steel points will go
nothing except Death and the Rain and To-morrow.

The cosmic symbolism of that is memorable.

What, then, is Sandburg? A humanitarian revolutionist who can do etchings in color, he has made himself the poet of Chicago, and so by implication, the poetical historian of the Middle West, its spirit, its strength, its revolutionary gusto and range. His barbaric naturalism has more tang and bite than Whitman's and is more suited to the uses of an industrial democracy than Whitman's is. There is an arrogance here, a violent strong-armed view of life, which the life in the mills, and hard sordid labor with machinery, has bred in us. This arrogance Sandburg links to the wilderness. By the machine route he has gone back to nature, a more raging, but a less luminous nature than Whitman's. Yet Sandburg's nature, too, has its beauty, the beauty of tooth and claw, of a field of daisies inhabited by wolves. His is, in short, the nature of revolutions, beautiful, terrible, and fascinating.

Such a nature is implicit in his characters. Such a nature is, he would have us believe, at the heart of Chicago, with, underneath it, a strange tenderness and hunger, which perhaps even the wolf shows to her own. Whether or not these Titans in time will bring in a revolution, an industrial democracy which shall be very stern against greed, wars to end war, and what a Georgia legislator termed "the poodle-petting classes," of course no man can say.

That such a movement once agitated many, and produced a very surprising poet, these four volumes of Sandburg will for some time bear witness.

What does the rise of the Middle West in our literature mean, besides a volume of more or less excellent poetry? In the first place it means vigor. Rude actuality is in all these poets. They sing the life that they see about them, and fly the imitative, the merely pretty, or sweet. Secondly, it means that a robust even if somewhat barbaric Americanism is again vocal. These are no library democrats! They sing America working, fighting the capitalist, aspiring, and they call on the ghosts of Washington and Lincoln to aid in establishing a new, an industrial democracy. They aspire too to see America artistic, to see her play as well as work, to see her really what her "patriots" pretend that she is. Morally, Sandburg and Masters desire a more liberal freedom. They disapprove of Puritan repressions, and desire free play for the emotions. In their views of the rôle of sex in life they are more radical than their poetical confreres. Though their poetry is alive, and pulsing with an industrial, human, and national consciousness, it is also poetry of Titanism, violent, aspiring, revolutionary. In much of it there breathes the spirit of brutal irony, the rage to destroy as well as build, that violent romanticism that would tear away life's veils, and in the very lust of honesty discover if there is anything behind the veil but fear, or greed, or nakedness, or death.

Lindsay's exuberant optimism and Sarett's warm Indian lyricism contrast strangely with the rapport of Masters and Sandburg.

In the worship of force and the glamour of bigness and strength, in the fierce aspirations for economic as well as human democracy, in the love of art and play unchecked by morality, and in the Bohemian view of sex, we have some of the elements of our aspiring middle-western Titanism. B. L. T. alone in any real sense has been a conservative counter-irritant. The sunny malice with which he has tilted at their too vulnerable windmills has given him often a light and easy victory. To a Passionate Professor, Say It with Flowers, The Passional Note, and Canopus are good examples of his sly art in the poetic tournament. It is an exhilarating thing for a region to find itself becoming as the Middle West has in recent years almost volcanically vocal. It will be still greater, if after the ash has had time to settle, and the roar and glow have a little abated, there remain a few scarlet poppies blooming in the fields where the soft still wood-notes of Pan may yet be heard by an attentive ear. In Sandburg's nocturnes, in Lindsay's Nightingale, and in Sarett's Indian melody we have, I suspect, about the only poppies that time's wind will not wither very soon.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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For information about later figures see the anthologies; *The Little Book of Modern Verse,* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1913, 1917, and *The Second Book of Modern Verse,* 1919, 1920, edited by Jessie B. Rittenhouse. The later editions contain bibliographies of poetry and brief information as to the authors' lives. *The New Poetry,* an anthology, Macmillan Co., 1917, 1923, edited by Harriet Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson, has in the later edition an excellent bibliography of poetry published from 1900 to 1923. *Poetry,* a Magazine of Verse, published monthly in Chicago since October, 1912, is invaluable for bibliographies and current information.

For critical studies of a general nature, *The New Era in American Poetry,* Henry Holt & Co., 1919, by Louis Untermeyer; and *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry,* Macmillan Co., 1917, by Amy Lowell, deal best with the

late writers. See too for further bibliographical and critical information, *The Younger American Poets* by Jessie B. Rittenhouse. An entertaining account of the changes in taste in American poetry is *America's Coming of Age, B. W. Huebsch,* by Van Wyck Brooks. For a light critical discussion of new schools and poets, see *Scepticisms,* Knopf, 1919, by Conrad Aiken. A volume which touches on the new school as an episode in a long warfare in English poetry is *Convention and Revolt in Poetry,* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919, by John Livingston Lowes; and for a discussion of generics from the traditional point of view, see *The Study of Poetry,* by Bliss Perry.

Chapter One

1. *Texts.*

Leaves of Grass, David McKay, the most attractive one-volume edition; *Leaves of Grass*—Complete Poetical Works, 1 vol., and Complete Prose Works, 1 vol., Small, Maynard and Co.; Selections from the Prose and Poetry of Whitman, edited by O. L. Triggs, 10 vols.; *Leaves of Grass,* Modern Student's Library, Scribner's, chronologically arranged, with an able critical introduction by Stuart P. Sherman.

2. *Biography.*

Walt Whitman, R. M. Bucke; *In Re Walt Whitman,* edited by literary executors; "Walt Whitman," G. R. Carpenter, *English Men of Letters;* "Walt Whitman," Bliss Perry, *American Men of Letters,* the best single biography; *Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person,* John Burroughs; *The Good Gray Poet, a Vindication,* W. D. O'Connor; *With Walt Whitman in Camden,* Horace Trau-

bel; *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman,* 2 vols., Doubleday Page & Co., 1921, by Emory Holloway, which contains the latest scholarship on Whitman; *The Bibliography of Walt Whitman,* Friedman's, N. Y., 1920, by Frank Shay.

3. *Criticism.*

America's Coming of Age, Van Wyck Brooks; *Whitman,* a Study, John Burroughs; *Chapters in Emerson and Other Essays,* J. J. Chapman; *Studies in Literature,* Edward Dowden; *American Literature,* John Macy; perfatory note to Poems of Walt Whitman, edited by W. M. Rossetti; *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion,* George Santayana; *Americans,* Stuart P. Sherman; *Poets of America,* E. C. Stedman; *Familiar Studies of Men and Books,* R. L. Stevenson; *Studies in Prose and Poetry,* A. C. Swinburne.

4. *Suggestions for readers.*

Those who wish a general knowledge of Whitman will do well to read Bliss Perry's biography of him, and the essays listed above, by Stuart P. Sherman, John Macy, George Santayana, and Van Wyck Brooks. In Whitman's prose, *Democratic Vistas,* there are unforgetable war pictures, and *Specimen Days in America* shows the poet's outlook on his own land. Of *Leaves of Grass* the following poems are especially noteworthy:

Walt Whitman: a complete picture of the poet and his mystical outlook. See also *Tears, Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,* and *Passage to India.*

Calamus: poems on friendship, see especially A Song; Recorders Ages Hence; When I Heard at the Close of the

Day; I Hear It Was Charged Against Me; We Two Boys Together Clinging; The Base of all Metaphysics.

Civil War Poems: in *Drum Taps,* for pictures of war, see Cavalry Crossing a Ford; Bivouac on a Mountain Side; Come Up From the Fields, Father; Vigil Strange I Kept; Look Down, Fair Moon; Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun; Reconciliation. For the westward urge of the country after the war, see in *Marches Now the War Is Over,* the poem, Pioneers, O Pioneers! And for the greatest of poems on Lincoln, When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd, and O Captain! My Captain!

Briefer poems: as fine little bits: A Farm Picture, The Runner, This Moment Yearning and Thoughtful, By Broad Potomac's Shore; A Child's Amaze; There Was a Child Went Forth.

Chapter Two

1. *American Ballads and Folk Songs.*

For works on American popular ballads, see the introduction and notes to *American Ballads and Songs,* Modern Student's Library, 1922, by Louise Pound, which is the most convenient brief modern collection. See, too, the following: *Cowboy Songs,* John A. Lomax; *Songs of the Cow Camp and Cattle Trail,* John A. Lomax; *Lonesome Tunes,* H. W. Gray Co., by Loraine Wyman and Howard Brockway; *Folk Songs of the Kentucky Mountains,* Boosey and Co., by Josephine McGill; *The Quest of the Ballad,* Princeton University Press, by W. Roy Mackenzie; *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians,* Putnam's, by Mrs. Campbell and Cecil J. Sharp; *Negro Folk Rhymes,* by J. W. Talley; and *The Book of American Negro Poetry,* by J. W. Johnson.

2. *Suggestions to readers.*

Those who wish a general acquaintance with the light popular poetry of these years should read the following poems, or books of poems.

John Hay: in his *Poems,* the Pike County Ballads.

Bret Harte: in his *Poems,* The Heathen Chinee; The Angelus.

Chas. G. Leland: in the *Hans Breitmann Ballads,* Hans Breitmann's Barty; Die Lorelei.

Will Carleton: in his *Complete Poems,* Out of the Old House, Nancy; Over the Hills to the Poor House; Gone with a Handsomer Man; Why Did They Kill My Baby?

James Whitcomb Riley: in his *Complete Poems,* The Old Swimmin' Hole; That Other Maud Muller; The Boys of the Old Glee Club; Knee Deep in June; An Old Sweetheart of Mine; Philiper Flash; When the Frost Is on the Punkin; Little Orphan Annie; When Our Baby Died; A Parting Guest.

Eugene Field: in his *Poems,* Little Boy Blue; Wynken, Blynken, and Nod; In the Firelight; The Dinkey-bird; The Lyttel Boy; The Bibliomaniac's Prayer; Dibdin's Ghost; Echoes from the Sabine Farm; The Wanderer.

Robert W. Service: In *The Spell of the Yukon,* read The Shooting of Dan McGrew; The Cremation of Sam McGee; and in *Rhymes of a Red Cross Man,* read Afternoon Tea, The Coward.

Bert Leston Taylor: Read all of *A Line O' Verse or Two,* and of *The Penny Whistle.*

Arthur Guitermann: in *The Laughing Muse* read The Origin of Species; A Fossiliferous Fable; Diplomacy. Glance too at his book, *The Mirthful Lyre.*

Carolyn Wells: An *Anthology of Humorous Poetry,* the best collection of light verse.

Louise Pound: *American Ballads and Songs,* a good varied collection.

John A. Lomax: Read his two collections: *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads,* 1910; and *Songs of the Cattle Trail and Cow Camp,* 1919.

Paul Lawrence Dunbar: all of *Lyrics of Love and Laughter.*

T. W. Talley: a collection of *Negro Folk Rhymes.*

J. W. Johnson: *The Book of America Negro Poetry.*

G. L. Kittredge: *English and Scottish Popular Ballads.* It is interesting to contrast these ballads with the American types. Read as some of the best:

1. The Twa Sisters
2. The Cruel Brother
3. Lord Randal
4. Edward
5. Kemp Owyne
6. Thomas Rhymer
7. Sir Patrick Spens
8. The Wife of Usher's Well
9. Bewick and Graham
10. Robin Hood

Chapter Three

I. Sidney Lanier:

1. *Texts.*

Poems, edited by his wife, with a memorial by W. H. Ward; *Select Poems,* with introduction and notes by Morgan Callaway, Jr.

2. *Biography.*

"Life," Edwin Mims, *American Men of Letters; Letters of Sidney Lanier,* selections from his correspondence, 1866-1881, 1 vol.; *Sidney Lanier, Reminiscences and Letters,*

D. C. Gilman, *South Atlantic Quarterly,* April, 1905; *Sidney Lanier, Recollections and Letters,* M. H. Northrup, *Lippincott's,* March, 1905.

3. *Criticism.*

Critical Comments in American Poetry, edited by Percy H. Boynton; *Questions at Issue,* Edmund Gosse; *Contemporaries,* T. W. Higginson; *A Study of Lanier's Poems,* C. W. Kent, Pub. Mod. Lang Association, vol. VII, pp. 33-63; *American Literature,* John Macy; *The Literature of the South,* M. J. Moses; *Views About Hamlet and Other Essays,* A. H. Tolman; *Southern Writers,* W. P. Trent.

4. *Suggestions to readers.*

Of the above, Mims' *Life;* the critical comments of John Macy; and those of Howard M. Jones—in Boynton—are the most stimulating.

Of Lanier's poems, the following are especially to be read: The Crystal; Sunrise; The Marshes of Glynn; Song of the Chattahoochee; The Revenge of Hamish; Corn; Evening Song; A Ballad of Trees and the Master; The Stirrup Cup; Tampa Robins; Marsh Song at Sunset; The Mocking Bird.

II. Joaquin Miller:

The best text and critical study and biography of Miller is *The Poetical Works of Joaquin Miller,* Putnam's, 1923, with introduction and notes by Stuart P. Sherman. This essay on Miller, Mr. Sherman has republished in *Americans.* See too bibliography and Critical Comments in Boynton's *American Poetry.*

Of Miller's poems, the following are most important: The Sea of Fire; The Sioux Chief's Daughter; The Last

of the Tschastas; Columbus; The Missouri; Westward Ho!; The Passing of Tennyson; The American Ocean; In Men Whom Men Condemn; Adios; Kit Carson's Ride; Picture of a Bull; Crossing the Plains.

III. The Albuminous Victorians.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). Her three volumes of *Poems* repay glancing through.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1836-1907): in his one volume of poetry, the best are Guilielmus Rex; Ode on the Unveiling of the Shaw Memorial; Unguarded Gates.

George Edward Woodberry: has a number of volumes of lyrics, sonnets, etc., of fair merit. The two sonnets, At Gibraltar, seem to me his best.

Lizette Woodward Reese (186-): Pleasant volumes of lyrics. Tears, her best sonnet.

Helen Hunt Jackson (1831-1885): *Poems,* have a sweet Western Fragrance. None especially famous.

Edward Rowland Sill (1841-1887): *Poems,* see The Fool's Prayer, Opportunity, Five Lives. A didactic poet.

John Bannister Tabb (1845-1909): his epigrams have neatness, but are a bit dull.

Chapter Four

I. For a view of English poetry at the turn of the century, see, besides the appropriate chapters in *The Cambridge History of English Literature,* Holbrook Jackson's interesting volume *The Eighteen-Nineties,* Grant Richard's, Ltd., 1913, and for a somewhat biased account of the decadence of the period, Max Nordau's *Degeneration.* A wittier account that gives us more than a glimpse at the ineffectual Bohemians of the day is Max Beerbohm's satire, *Seven Men* (1920).

For a view of the French school, see Arthur Symons' *The Symbolist Movement in Literature,* Archibald Constable, London, 1908, and republished by Dutton, revised and enlarged, 1919. It contains an excellent bibliography of editions and translations of the poets, and of critical articles on the school. A useful discussion copiously illustrated is, *Instigations,* Boni and Liveright, 1920, by Ezra Pound; and for a modern's interest in continental verse, see *Six French Poets,* a study in contemporary literature, Macmillan Co., by Amy Lowell.

II.

1. Richard Hovey:

Poems, Duffield, 1907-8, by Richard Hovey, is complete. *Along the Trail,* Small, Maynard and Co., 1898, and *Songs —, More Songs—,* and *Last Songs From Vagabondia,* are his most important works.

For criticism of Hovey, see the preface to *The Holy Graal and Other Fragments,* 1907, by Bliss Carman; *The Younger American Poets,* pp. 1-27, by Jessie B. Rittenhouse; and the Critical Comments and bibliography in Boynton's *American Poetry.*

2. Bliss Carman:

The above *Vagabondia Books,* and Miss Rittenhouse's anthologies contain most of his best work. *Pipes of Pan,* 5 vols., *Echoes from Vagabondia,* 1912, and *April Airs,* 1916, may also be cited.

3. George Santayana:

His one volume, *Sonnets and Other Poems,* 1894, and republished with introduction, 1923.

4. Cale Young Rice:

Collected Plays and Poems, 1915.

5. William Vaughn Moody:

(a) Texts.

The Masque of Judgment, 1900; *Poems,* 1901; *The Fire Bringer,* 1904; *The Great Divide,* a prose play, 1907; *The Faith Healer,* a prose play, 1909; *The Poems and Poetic Dramas* of William Vaughn Moody, with an introduction by J. M. Manley, 1912.

(b) Biography and criticism.

Introduction by J. M. Manly to *Poems and Plays,* 2 vols.; *Some Letters of William Vaughn Moody,* with an introduction by D. G. Mason; and Critical Comments of Boynton's *American Poetry,* gives further comment and bibliography.

III. Suggestions to readers.

For general reading of the poetry of the period, the following is a representative list:

Richard Hovey, Bliss Carman: *Songs from Vagabondia; More Songs from Vagabondia; Last Songs from Vagabondia.*

Richard Hovey: *Spring.*

Cale Young Rice: The Monsoon Breaks; A Night in Avignon; Porzia; David; The Mystic; Old Garth's Jess; By the Indus; Jael.

George Santayana: *Sonnets.*

William Vaughn Moody: Gloucester Moors; Good Friday Night; Ode in Time of Hesitation; The Death of Eve; I Am the Woman; The Brute; On a Soldier Fallen

in the Philippines; The Quarry; The Bracelet of Grass; Faded Pictures; The Daguerreotype; The Menagerie.

Chapter Five

1. *References.*

Though much of the criticism of the latest poets is in book reviews and magazine articles, and must be sought in The Reader's Guide to periodicals, the following works will prove indispensable to the reader of modern verse:

Poetry Magazine, 1912-1923.

Jessie B. Rittenhouse's *Little Book of Modern Verse* and *Second Book of Modern Verse; The Younger American Poets.*

Monroe and Henderson, *The New Poetry,* 1917, 1923.

Louis Untermeyer, *The New Era in American Poetry; American Poetry Since 1900,* Holt, 1923.

Amy Lowell, *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry.*

Harry Hansen, *Midwest Portraits,* Harcourt, Brace, 1923.

2. *Suggestions to readers.*

The following list of poems and books of poetry contains a representative selection of the best that has been written during the last ten or twelve years. As a selection for study or for club readings, it should prove useful:

Edgar Lee Masters: two books, *The Spoon River Anthology* and *The Domesday Book.*

Carl Sandburg: the following are among his best poems —Chicago; Sketch; Jack; Fog; Back Yard; The Harbor; Killers; Our Prayer of Thanks; Soup; Wilderness; Cool Tombs; The Windy City; To a Contemporary Bunkshooter; Washington Monument at Night.

His four volumes should be read, however, as he wrote them. It is unwise to anthologize him.

Vachel Lindsay: The Congo; General Booth; How Samson Bore Away the Gates of Gaza; Bryan, Bryan, Bryan; The Kallyope Yell; The Chinese nightingale; Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight; On The Building of Springfield; The Eagle That Is Forgotten; and Pop Corn, Glass Balls, etc.

Wm. E. Leonard: The Lynching Bee.

Lew Sarett: Read in *The Box of God* the poem, The Box of God, and glance through the rest of the volume.

Robert Frost: The following poems: The Death of the Hired Man; A Hundred Collars; Mending Wall; Home Burial; The Fear; Birches; To the Thawing Wind.

E. A. Robinson: The following poems: Flammonde; Ben Jonson Entertains a Man From Stratford; Calverly's; Miniver Cheevy; Richard Cory; Uncle Ananias; Old King Cole; Launcelot.

Eunice Tietjens: the volume, *Profiles from China.*

Amy Lowell: *Men, Women, and Ghosts* (read all of it), and perhaps the polyphonic prose volume, *Can Grande's Castle.*

In Monroe and Henderson: *The New Poetry:* all of Richard Aldington, of H. D., of J. G. Fletcher, of F. S. Flint, and of Ezra Pound, especially The River Merchant's Wife, and Exile's Letter.

Conrad Aiken: Music I Heard; Dead Cleopatra; Morning Song of Senlin; Evening Song of Senlin (these all in M. & H. or Rittenhouse's two anthologies).

Edna St. Vincent Millay: God's World; Renascence; Rosemary; Burial; Prayer to Persephone, Epitaph, Recuerdo, etc.

3. List of books of modern American poetry recommended to clubs and libraries:

The following bibliography does not, of course, include all the best work of these authors. It is merely a list of those volumes that in the author's opinion have enough total merit, or general interest, to warrant their inclusion in a list of say the foremost fifty volumes.

(a) Anthologies.

The New Poetry, Macmillan Co., 1923, edited by Monroe and Henderson.

The Little Book of Modern Verse, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917, Jessie B. Rittenhouse.

The Second Book of Modern Verse, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920, Jessie B. Rittenhouse.

Some Imagist Poets, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1915-16-17, vols. I-III.

Others, an Anthology of New Verse, Knopf, 1916-17.

Des Imagistes, Albert and Chas. Boni, New York, 1914.

Modern Russian Poetry, Harcourt, Brace & Co., edited by Deutsch-Yarmolinsky.

Contemporary German Poetry, Harcourt, Brace & Co., (1923), edited by Deutsch-Yarmolinsky.

Poetry, a Magazine of Verse, 1912-1923, edited by Harriet Monroe.

American Ballads and Songs, Modern Student's Library, 1922, edited by Louise Pound.

Cowboy Songs, John A Lomax.

Negro Folk Rhymes, J. W. Talley.

An Anthology of Humorous Poetry, Carolyn Wells.

(b) Volumes of Individual Poets.

Conrad Aiken: *Turns and Movies,* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916. *The Charnel Rose; Senlin, a Biography,* Four Seas Co., 1918.

Richard Aldington: *Images, Old and New,* Four Seas Co., 1916.

Sherwood Anderson: *Mid-American Chants,* B. W. Huebsch, N. Y., 1921.

William Rose Benét: *Merchants from Cathay,* Century Co., N. Y., 1913. *Moons of Grandeur,* G. H. Doran Co., 1920.

Witter Bynner: *The Beloved Stranger,* Alf. A. Knopf, N. Y., 1919. *Spectra,* by Anne Knish (Arthur Davison Ficke) and Emmanuel Morgan (Witter Bynner), Mitchell Kennerley, N. Y., 1916. *A Canticle of Pan,* Alf A. Knopf, 1920.

Adelaide Crapsey: *Verse,* Alf. A. Knopf, New York, 1922.

H. D. (Mrs. Richard Aldington): *Sea-garden: Imagist Poems,* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916. *Hymen,* Henry Holt & Co., 1916.

Arthur Davison Ficke: *Sonnets of a Portrait Painter* (revised) and *Other Sonnets,* Mitchell Kennerley, 1922.

John Gould Fletcher: *Irradiations,* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916. *Goblins and Pagodas,* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1916.

Robert Frost: *A Boy's Will,* Henry Holt and Co., 1915. *North of Boston,* Henry Holt and Co., 1915. *Mountain Interval,* Henry Holt & Co., 1916.

Herman Hagedorn: *A Troop of the Guard and Other Poems,* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1909.

William Ellery Leonard: *The Lynching Bee and Other Poems,* B. W. Huebsch, 1920.

Vachel Lindsay: *Collected Poems,* Macmillan Co., 1923.

Amy Lowell: *A Dome of Many-coloured Glass,* Macmillan Co., 1914. *Sword Blades and Poppy Seed,* Mac-

millan Co., 1914. *Men, Women, and Ghosts,* Macmillan Co., 1916. *Can Grande's Castle,* Macmillan Co., 1918. *Pictures of the Floating World,* Macmillan Co., 1919. *Fir-flower Tablets,* translated from the Chinese by Florence Ayscough, English Versions by Amy Lowell, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1921.

Percy Mackaye: *Collected Poems,* Macmillan Co., 1916.

Edgar Lee Masters: *Spoon River Anthology* (with additions), Macmillan Co., 1916. *The Domesday Book,* Macmillan Co., 1921.

Edna St. Vincent Millay: *Renascence and Other Poems,* Mitchell Kennerley, 1917. *Second April,* Mitchell Kennerley, 1921. *Aria DaCapo,* Mitchell Kennerley, 1921. *A Few Figs from Thistles,* Frank Shay, 1921. *The Lamp and the Bell,* Frank Shay, 1921.

Grace Fallow Norton: *Little Gray Songs from St. Joseph's,* Houghton Mifflin Co., 1912.

James Oppenheim: *War and Laughter,* Century Co., 1916. *The Book of Self,* Alf. A. Knopf, 1917.

Ezra Pound: *Canzoni,* Elkin Mathews, London, 1911. *Lustra,* with Earlier Poems, Alf. A. Knopf, 1917. *Umbra,* Elkin Mathews, London, 1920.

Edwin Arlington Robinson: *Collected Poems,* Macmillan Co., 1921.

Carl Sandburg: *Chicago Poems,* Henry Holt & Co., 1916. *Cornhuskers,* Henry Holt & Co., 1918. *Smoke and Steel,* Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1920. *Slabs of the Sunburnt West,* Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1922.

Lew Sarett: *The Box of God,* Henry Holt & Co., 1922.

Sara Teasdale: *Rivers to the Sea,* Macmillan Co., 1915.

Eunice Tietjens: *Profiles from China,* Alf. A. Knopf, 1919.

Louis Untermeyer: *The New Adam,* Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1920.

John V. A. Weaver: *In American,* Alf. A. Knopf, N. Y., 1921. *Finders,* Alf. A. Knopf, 1923.

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